ERIK LARSEN'S FREAK FORCE

ARENA

MAGAZINE

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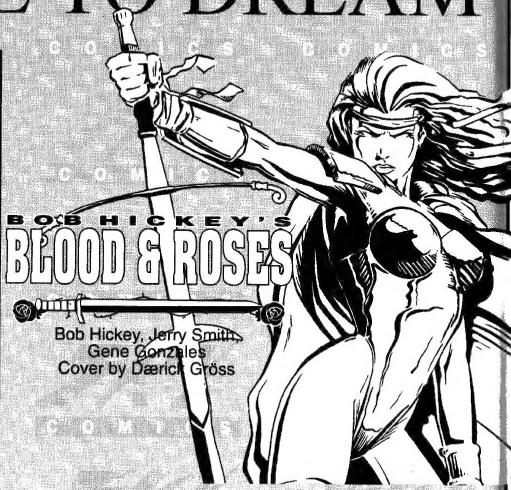

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About The Cover ...

ERIK LARSEN introduces one of his earliest creations from the days of pre-adolescence... FREAK FORCE!

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Editorial

– Guest Editorial by Scott Pierce (Joe was really busy!).

You really have to tip the hat to Malibu's Ultraverse.

With the dominance of Image and Valiant at the beginning of the summer, you really had to question the chances of a new publisher with yet another universe. How could they possibly compete with the big boys?

It's simple. They delivered what was promised and when it was scheduled. Their timing couldn't have been better either. With Image readership hitting rock bottom because of late books, readers were looking for something fresh, something they could count on to be there each and every month. Malibu's Ultraverse delivered. They had the nerve to combine quality, innovation and punctuality. Let's face it, plain and simple, Malibu has guts.

Prime and *Hardcase* are already up to issue #7, more than most Image titles that started last year. They havn't been selling 50 million copies either. They haven't even sold 1 million of any issue. They have, however, sold consistantly. They've reached a state of reliability that retailers have come to trust, a not insignificant feat. Over the past year, we've seen who can and can't be trusted. We know who can be counted on and who is just feeding us a plate of hype with extra gravy. It's nice to have a comic publisher you can take at face value, even if that face happens to be Sludge.

A word to the wise or not so wise; trust isn't foil-stamped and doesn't have a $4.95 cover price.

Honestly,

Scott Pierce

Thrown To The Lions!

CORRESPONDENCE & ADVICE

This month we hardly received more that ten letters for "Thrown To The Lions." Now would be a good time to sit down and write. Chances favor you. You just might see your words in print. Why not give it a shot, eh?

As always, if your letter sees print, you get a free issue.

Dear "Thrown To The Lions,"

Are you guys still there? I know you're still alive, because I saw you at the Mid-Ohio Con in November. It looks like the lateness bug has hit everybody. I can understand a few weeks late, but your news section was at least a month or more behind! Don't think this letter is turning into another "Scott Kincaid soap box," I'm just pointing out that there are readers out here who do care about *Arena Magazine* and we want to lend support in whatever way we can. I hope you will be able to get yourselves back on schedule soon, because I would much rather get my news amd interviews from you than the glossy-stock toilet paper mags that seem to have a stranglehold on the market.

In parting, let me say I look forward to each and every issue no matter how late. I hope the negative tone of this letter is taken positively. Keep up the great work.

A dedicated *Arena* lover,
Karl Sinclair
Grand Rapids, MI

We're late, yes. We're great?... yes. Also, we're understaffed. Thanks for the support. We do what we can. Here's to timeliness.

Dear *Arena* guys,

Hello. I'm just dropping a note to say I have never picked up *Arena* before until issue #12 because of the *Sky Zero* ashcan. Now, I'm an avid reader. You're book is great. It's very conversational and seems to have a very relaxed atmosphere about it without trying hard to be "hip" or "cool." I really appreciate the addition of your magazine to the industry and wish you many years of success. As long as your publishing the magazine the way it is, count me in.

Only negatory comment: Lose the polybagging. Trading cards are passe.

Only inquisitive comment: Hey! How can I get back issues of *Arena*?

Thanks for hearing me out.

Your friend,
Jason O'Connell
Lewisburg, SC

Thanks for the kind words, Jason and in order to get back issues just check out the ad in this very issue.

Dear *Arena* People,

With *Wizard* and *Hero*, I'm never too sure if I just paid for a bunch of glossy eyecandy Image ads and a price guide or what. That's a pleasant difference with *Arena*... it's an entertaining and informational read--*unquestionably*. Now if only it would come out on time...

One gripe, tho-- It seems that the only independent comics getting any fanboy recognition these days are *Cerebus* and *Bone*. While I agree both are exceptional, there are many more titles that are deserving of the press they get. Which is where you come in. With your relaxed nonfanboy atmosphere, your mag would be the perfect "Arena" to discuss some of the other gems in the black & white and independent realm.. These guys have been doing "creator owned comics" all along without the recognition these Image, Legend, and Bravura guys are getting. I suggest Martin Wagner's *Hepcats*, *Hate*, and Evan Dorkin's *Pirate Corps$!* and *Milk & Cheese*. All are great and creative series worthy of much more attention than they have received. With the massive amount of stuff out there, it's a shame that only Image, Marvel, DC, and Valiant seem to get all the press. Just a suggestion-- maybe just a column or something that looks at the world of independents and what it has to offer.

Awaiting your next issue,
Mark Sirex
Logan, UT

We try not to neglect the smaller companies and I don't think anybody would argue with you about ***Bone*** *and* ***Cerebus*** *being some of the best "creator owned" stuff out there. Basically, we are striving to take the industry as a whole and cast an objective eye. A column on independents wouldn't be a bad idea, though. I'll work on that.*

Dear "Thrown,"

Hi. After hiding virtually for years in fandom oblivion, I've decided to write my first letter to you guys at *Arena*, since you're my favorite magazine.

Some things I've really enjoyed

ARENA MAGAZINE

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recently in your publication: the Shooter interview in #14 was very well done, along with (as always) Lurene Haines's tips on breaking into the industry, and Scott's Blazing Top Ten cracked me up yet again. The only thing I have a problem with is the lame fan art section, but I'm sure it's fun for the kids.

Being one of your older fans (let's just say I remember Eisenhower) I'm a big fan of the way *Arena* reports the news without all the unneeded flash found in other "news" publications. So keep up the good work, and please find the money order for the renewal of my subscription. Thanks.

Jose-Felipe Gonzalez
New York, NY

Thanks for the excellent letter, Jose-Felipe. You may notice that our Fan Art section, "lame" as it maybe, is not in this issue. Maybe I should call up ***Wizard*** *and* ***Hero*** *and see if they have any leftovers. Heh. Heh.*

Dear "Thrown To The Lions,"

I've come to accept that your magazine will normally be late on the shelves. The news is sometimes out of date but, for the most part, pretty current. Yes, I accept the lateness as just a part of your great magazine and, you know, I don't mind, really. If your magazine must be a bit tardy in order to produce its quality, reader-oriented interiors, then so be it! I'm hooked.

In retrospect, it would be fan-tastic if you could get *Arena* monthly simply because I enjoy reading it so much, or perhaps you could lengthen the issues to about, oh... 150 pages or so.

But I didn't sit down here to complain. I sat to write just to let you guys know that you're doing a wonderful job.

How can I get back issues of *Arena*? I've asked my local retailers but they have no idea. I really would like to get my hands on the Silvestri issue.

Anyway, thanks, amigos! Keep it up!

With Best Wishes,
Todd Johnson (not the *Tribe* guy)
Boston, MA

NEXT! We're gonna talk to the illustrious Frank Miller about anything he wants. Be there to see just what it might be, okay? Cool.

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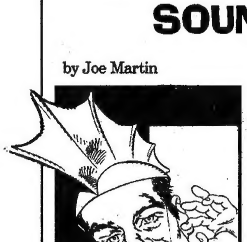
ERIK LARSEN!!!

THE MODERN MASTER OF SOUND EFFECTS SPEAKS!

by Joe Martin



Erik Larsen: I'm sitting here inking like a fool as we speak.

Joe Martin: *What are you inking?*

EL: I'm inking a double page spread – page two and three – of *Savage Dragon* #6.

JM: *Right there in Arena Magazine!*

Your titles are doing extremely well...

EL: I'm trying to do something about that! [laughs]

JM: *Are things going according to your design?*

EL: Uh, I guess [laughs]. Gee, I don't know. I'm surviving... that's what I'd hoped for.

JM: *Well, yeah. But you're more than surviving, you're flourishing.*

EL: We hoped that when we broke away from mighty Marvel that we'd be able to continue to exist and we did. That's cool. When we started doing some spin-off stuff we were glad that people still responded as well as they had. There was nothing really against Marvel, in particular. It's just that I had some characters that I'd created, the Dragon being one of the highest among them, and I just wasn't that keen on having somebody else owning them.

JM: *Who would be gung-ho to give over all the characters they created to a corporation?*

EL: Exactly. I mean, at one time creators didn't really have a choice but...

JM: *Now they do.*

EL: Now they do. Right. That's what Image is about.

JM: *You can break away and create your characters and your stories and have total autonomy and enjoy your creator's rights.*

EL: ...Sheesh! Yeah, that's right [laughs]! Things are going nicely. It's great when people respond positively to whatever it is you're working on.

JM: *Among the top books is* ***Savage Dragon*** *and* ***Superpatriot*** *which I feel are two of the finest Image titles. When was it that you discovered you were able to write so well – don't blush!*

EL: [Chuckle] I'm fairly critical of my own stuff. I try to analyze things with as objective a view as I can. I think I do okay. The plotting is a little weak at times but I'm working on it. I think if I have a strength then it's a good ear for natural sounding dialogue.

JM: *That is a Larsen strength. You also do good characterization. As you told me once, you like round characters.*

EL: [Muffled snicker]

JM: *Somebody just held up a sign that says, "Tell him to make* ***Superpatriot*** *an ongoing series."*

EL: [Laughs] I'm working on it. Ideally, that's what I wanted but Dave (Johnson) has other commitments that would be a big hindrance.

JM: *He's committed to DC's* ***Chain Gang War*** *for a while. Is that it?*

EL: Yeah. I can pull him away for a little bit but he's co-owner of that and *Superpatriot* is a work-for-hire deal.

JM: *He's a co-owner of* ***Chain Gang War****?*

EL: I believe so. You can quote me on it but I don't know if it's accurate at all.

JM: *"According to Erik Larsen..."*

EL: [Laughs] DC is doing a lot of that sort of thing lately.

JM: *If he tried to take that title somewhere else I wonder what would happen.*

EL: Uh, maybe it would sell.

JM: *Ripping on DC Comics!*

EL: [Laughs] I rip on everybody!

JM: *You know, I would imagine, though, that the sales are picking up as a result of his doing* ***Superpatriot****. I went back and picked them up and I'm sure other people have too.*

EL: I hope so. I should probably put more plugs in *Superpatriot* for it.

JM: So, anyway, what inspired you to come up with Freak Force?

EL: I don't know [laughs]. I had a bunch of these characters around for a while. Most of the characters you see with animal heads on top of human bodies and stuff like that is from when I was a kid – like the Shrew and Mako and Horridus. I haven't made any new guys with animal heads lately so if you see these kind of characters you can probably figure, "Well, that character is 400 years old..." [laughs]

JM: *Can you remember back when you were a kid and you read a book that affected you like, "Wow! This is a really good book!"*

EL: *The Incredible Hulk* with Herb Trimpe artwork! Happy Herb was it. The time I started getting into comic books a lot of stuff was over. Kirby was gone... over at DC doing DC stuff and when I got in I charged headlong into Marvel stuff.

JM: *Back when you first sat down and started playing with these sketches, had you made up your mind that you wanted to work in comics?*

EL: Pretty much. I don't know what in the world I would've ended up doing if I hadn't got into the comic industry... probably delivering pizza or something. I have no other skills whatsoever. Scary. Of course, I can write. Maybe I'd be doing research for some great American novel.

JM: *Was the animal head thing kind of a bonus as far as the* ***Ninja Turtles*** *crossover?*

EL: Uh, actually the reason that I did that was simply because I got a pal that I corresponded with for years and the man's name is Michael Dooney. We've been buddies forever, I think. We always wanted to do some kind of crossover-team-up thing but I was always at Marvel or DC or whatever. It finally got to the point where I was doing something that was creator-owned and he was at Mirage so he had the power to be able to swing something.

JM: *Speaking of being at Marvel, do you remember the reaction to your early work on* ***Amazing Spider-Man****?*

EL: Yeah. I took over after Todd (McFarlane) and I felt that I would make the transition a bit more smooth than I did with *Doom Patrol* where I followed after Steve Lightle and people were screaming that it was too severe of a style change. I decided to keep going with the funky poses and the wacky panel borders and stuff. There was never any point where I actually tried to draw like Todd. Our styles were just very similar I think in as far as they both have a cartoon bent to them. There was that, but I never tried to imitate Todd other than doing the wacky panel borders. I wasn't picking up any anatomy from him but I sure got grief for it [loud laughter]! It was like I can't win for trying, you know! I got crap either way I went.

JM: *But now your styles have gone in different directions a bit.*

EL: Yeah. I think that was apparent when I took over on the adjectiveless *Spider-Man*, or "Todd's *Spider-Man*" as some called it.

JM: *I think the inking styles are quite different.*

EL: Definitely.

JM: *Todd uses lots of little ticks and nibs and stuff...*

EL: And I can't get a clean line from a pen to save my life [laughs]! I am generally somewhat pleased with how this stuff turns out but I'm able to do stuff with inks that you simply can't convey with pencil. I think my style has changed a lot because I'm inking, too.

It's funny, though. I've never been one of those artists who bitched and moaned about inkers and, for the most part, on the *Spider-Man* books I picked the inkers that I wanted.

JM: *I would suppose that since you are now inking your own work that you don't fully pencil a page before applying the inks?*

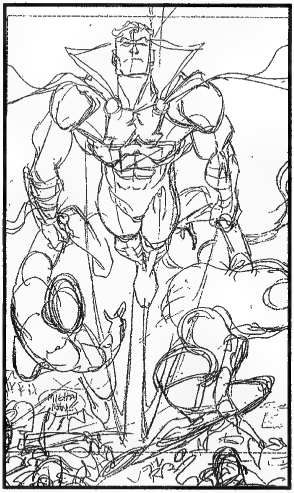
EL: Right. I scribble.

JM: *So, it's rough?*

EL: Very rough. I should send you guys a copy of one of my pencilled pages.

JM: *Yeah. Send it.*

EL: Okay [laughs]! You can show a before and after kind of thing. People will go, "What in the world is that?!" When Chris (Eliopoulos) gets the pages to letter he often doesn't know what's what. In the dialogue sometimes I'll put something like, "Blob #1 says and Blob #2 says."



JM: *[Laughs] I bet that's fun. How do you ink? What do you use?*

EL: Higgins ink, usually, with a Hunt 102 pen.

JM: *Not much brush?*

EL: None. I can't use a brush. I hold a pencil funny so there's no way I could use a brush.

JM: *No brush.*

*Okay, so I have to ask what's with the logo? Every issue it seems to get bigger and bigger. **Savage Dragon** #5 looks a lot like what Marvel did with **Deadpool** and **Gambit**.*

EL: There was a time when *Spectacular Spider-Man* was being done by Ed Hannigan and every month he would screw around with the logo and I thought that was kind of neat. #3 (of *Savage Dragon*) had a tiny logo and #1 had a logo that was burned through everything. I have the logo in the computer so I can do all kinds of neat things with it.

***JM:** Like a reverse or upside-down or something...*

EL: Yeah. Practically everything as soon as I get around to it.

***JM:** And you will, I'm sure. So, what's one word that accurately describes Keith Giffen?*

EL: ...one word is all 1 get? [laughs] Keith's fairly easy to work with, at times [laughs], when he's on his medication.

***JM:** [Laughs]*

EL: I outline what I want with Keith and we work together rather well. I don't know if anybody has had too much trouble with him as long as you communicate what audience you're aiming for and what tone you want to have.

***JM:** So, initially you planned to do **Dragon** at Megaton?*

EL: No. *Vanguard* was planned to be an ongoing title but not *Dragon*.

***JM:** That's where you met Gary Carlson, right?*

EL: Yeah.

The Dragon appeared in the Megaton comic but it was never a point where he was going to get his own book.

***JM:** **Youngblood** appeared in that, too, didn't it?*

EL: Kind of. The *Megaton Explosion* was an ad book from Megaton that was outlining some of their upcoming projects and *Youngblood* -- Rob's (Liefeld) *Youngblood* at that time -- was one of the things in there.

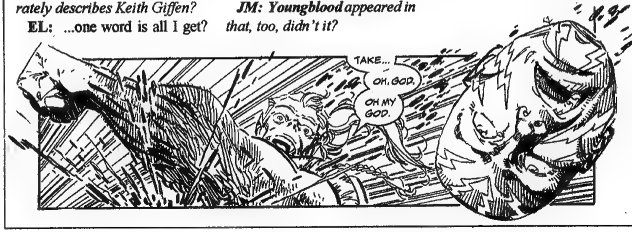
***JM:** Megaton wasn't aware of what they had then. You were doing something and Rob Liefeld, Jackson Guice and Angel Medina...*

EL: Clarke Hawbaker and Gary Carlson.

***JM:** They had a cache of talent there -- some of whom were destined to break it big in the next few years.*

But let's talk about Adam Hughes. You're working with him on something. How's that coming along?

EL: Working with Adam is... challenging. We're not setting any land-speed records here [chuckles]. The challenge to write



something for Adam is to try and accurately depict the future because he's, well, slow.

JM: *He's doing the* ***Savage Dragon Annual*** *#1. You need to get somebody working on your second annual.*

EL: I need to get somebody working on my first annual and have Adam be the second annual. Actually, I'm still trying to get the bulk of the plot kicked into shape here. We did the back-up in *Dragon* #4 together and he's suppose to be doing a pile of pin-ups for me.

The thing about the annual is that I'm essentially writing a story that takes place in the future. It has to because he's not going to be able to get it done this week, you know... or next week for that matter. I have to think, "Well, if this is taking place a year in the future then where is the Dragon going to be at that time?"

As soon as *Dragon* #6 is over I'm going to be a bit more spontaneous with the book. I'd like to be able to go wherever I please. *Freak Force* is an easy book to go off in whatever direction because I'm so far ahead on it. On that book, Vic (Bridges) is pencilling #6.

JM: *So you can breathe a bit easier dealing with* ***Freak Force*** *than with* ***Dragon****. If I were to ask you what were the major future plans for Dragon you'd say?*

EL: I'd say that I have lots of plans that I want to do but whether or not I get around to doing them soon... I don't know. [Laughs] No, I know but I don't. Does that make sense?

JM: *Hmm.*

EL: [Laughs] It's really a matter of which path I choose. I outline background stuff and characterization stuff that can last me probably 40 issues but it's like I've got this character called the Fiend who shows up in #3 and then I've got a couple Fiend stories that are just bobbing around in my head but whether those will be issues #11 and #20 or #20 and #60... I don't know. I'm introducing a character called R. Richard Richards, the publisher of the *Chicago Voice*, and he's your basic J. Jonah Jameson rip and he's going to send off a robotic Dragon-Slayer after the Dragon and I want to do stuff with that but...

JM: *You don't know when.*

EL: Basically, yeah.

JM: *What you were saying is sort of like this new girl who you've introduced. She's trying to get Dragon to date her and she resembles Mary Jane, right?*

EL: ...uh, no comment [laughs]. I will do a lot of stuff like that. She resembles my Mary Jane. The one I drew when I was doing *Spider-Man*. She doesn't particularly resemble Mark Bagley's Mary Jane. It's like I've got a newscaster named Sam Hayes who is Tempest from the *Doom Patrol*. I draw him and physically he's the Tempest that I drew when I was doing *Doom Patrol*. Nobody else has drawn him to look anything like that. I don't look at that face and say, "Well, this is the same character." That's just the way I draw that one kind of guy. Nobody else is using it so I'll keep that sort of thing going. I don't think that there's that much problem in that. She's my version of Mary Jane. She doesn't act like Mary Jane. She just looks like the way I drew Mary Jane. I guess you could say I'm in a rut, you know [laughs].

JM: *Yeah, you can't draw any other women but Mary Jane [laughs]. So is that old lady really Dragon's mother?*

EL: You'll just have to read.

JM: *"Read the book."*

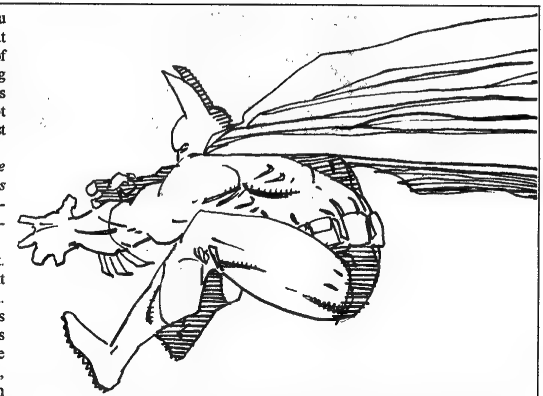
EL: Yup. It's like I get kids asking me questions like that all the time. "Could you tell me the Dragon's origin? Could you do this? And this? And THIS?" I just have to say, "If I tell you that wouldn't it kind of suck? If I told you everything, then where's the fun of finding it out yourself?" Rather than having the origin in the actual comic book story maybe I should just put it in the letters'

YOW! MIGHTY MAN!
I THOUGHT HE WENT THE BIG A-WAY!

page, you know? That would kind of suck. Telling the Dragon's origin is not high on my list of priorities.

JM: *So the readers shouldn't immediately expect it?*

EL: Right. Don't expect it anytime soon. Even if this woman does turn out to be his mother, don't expect an origin-type thing. I'm just... I'm having fun. I'm definitely having a lot of fun here.



JM: *That's a quote.*

EL: [Chuckles] It'll be nice to actually get Freak Force out of the book because the thing about them being there is it's tied the book down to having a definite timeline. I have to have them leave at the end of issue #6.

JM: *You're booting them out.*

EL: Yes. They get their own book. *Freak Force* is already written and draw and lettered.

JM: *Does Dragon join up with those guys?*

EL: Dragon is part of the Chicago Police Force. Members of Freak Force were recruited as cops in the Dragon book. When Freak Force breaks away from the *Dragon* book and the Chicago police, then... they're separate things. That's not to say that they won't join up in the future.

JM: *So you've got the* ***Savage Dragon****,* ***Freak Force****,* ***Vanguard*** *and the* ***Superpatriot*** *miniseries... by the way, is Superpatriot ever going to speak?*

EL: By the end of #4 he's talking again. Then Superpatriot becomes part of Freak Force and then he's featured in that book. Keith's (Giffen) objective when we were plotting was to get him out of the government's hands and in the mental place where he could be part of this team. That was pretty much it. I needed to get the character from Point A to Point B and have some fun stuff happen in the midst of it all.

JM: *Some fun stuff and some brutal stuff happens.*

EL: *Superpatriot* is actually more Keith's book than it is mine. He's much more involved with that. A lot of the dialogue that ends up in the book is his. For the most part I'm writing sound effects for this book. I'm actually very sound-effect oriented.

JM: *That's another Larsen strength, I suppose. Do you have other creations in the works?*

EL: There's going to be another *Superpatriot* miniseries. Dave (Johnson) is going to draw it and Keith is going to write it. It'll be the same wacky team for the second one. Of course, in that one he should be talking, hopefully. Also I've got another project that I'm not sure if I'm going to do a miniseries or an ongoing series called *The Deadly Duo*. And there's a story I'd like to tell about Star in a miniseries.

JM: *Is* ***Vanguard*** *a mini or a regular series?*

EL: We're still deciding. We've got up to 5 issues solicited and #6 is in the works. Actually, *Vanguard* is being worked on in all sorts of different directions. *Vanguard* #5 is completely pencilled. *Vanguard* #4, as far as I know, hasn't been started yet.

JM: *Who's doing that one?*

FREAK FORCE
FEATURING:
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EL: #4 is by Rick Leonardi. Jason Pearson is drawing #2. Joe Madureira is doing #3. #5 is by Angel Medina. #6 is by a fella by the name of Andy Smith.

JM: *Andy Smith? He was doing* ***Quasar*** *for Marvel, wasn't he?*

EL: And Silver Surfer.

JM: *He draws a bit like Bart Sears, doesn't he?*

EL: A bit. He was Bart's old assistant.

JM: *That might explain the similarities then, huh? Who is Dave Williams? He draws a tad like Adam Hughes.*

EL: Dave is a young artist. He did *Jaguar* for DC's Impact line. And he's been working on a lot of stuff that for some reason or another he hasn't ended up finishing. He's been doing a *Legends of the Dark Knight* story for quite a while. I think he's doing some stuff with Rob Liefeld now. He's doing some trading cards and stuff. When he started he was a local guy here in Oakland.

JM: *You met him at a convention?*

EL: Yeah. He flips around, though. The first time I saw his stuff he was on a heavy Art Adams influence and swearing up and down that he wasn't doing Art Adams.

JM: *[Laughs] Did it look good, though?*

EL: Yeah! It looked like Art. He did a book called *Tommy and the Monsters* and then his next influence was that he looked like Steve Rude for a while. He's one of those guys that's able to pick up somebody's style very easily without swiping from them. It's kind of a neat thing to be able to do. Vic Bridges draws like John Byrne in a lot of ways but he doesn't swipe Byrne.

JM: *When you began developing your abilities was there an artist that you particularly emulated?*

EL: There's a lot of guys – still is. Obviously, Jack Kirby had somewhat of an influence... Walt Simonson, most assuredly and John Byrne, Frank Miller, Gil Kane and Steve Ditko and Herb Trimpe, of course. I still look at stuff and analyze what I like about it and use it in my own stuff.

JM: *Is there current things out there that you think are commendable?*

EL: I really like what all the Image guys are doing, of course. I like what Jae Lee does when he's not rushing through pages in an hour. I like his stuff a lot. He could stand to throw a background in occassionally. I like what Mike Mignola brings to a page. It's not something that I'm able to do. I like what Art Adams does when he does it. I've liked Art's work forever, really.

JM: *Have you considered speaking to him about doing something?*

EL: I have spoke to him and he says he'll do a pin-up but who knows? I wish just for the sake of Art in his career that in some of these cases he would have chosen something a little more commercial. It's cool that he just does whatever he wants to but in terms of his own well-being I think that... well, if you do an *X-Men* thing then that helps draw attention to when you do *Gumby*.

JM: *Those* ***Gumby*** *books he did were great!*

EL: Yeah! I love the work that he does but he would be better served to do...

JM: *An issue of* ***Vanguard*** *or maybe* ***Star****?*

EL: [Laughs] Well, to do an issue or two of a higher circulation project and get them under his belt and then that would help sell his next pet project. He's doing some stuff for the Legend

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imprint at Dark Horse now and I hope that does well for him. I would love nothing better.

JM: Monkeyman and O'Brien. Angel and the Ape.

EL: Yeah. Well, he's taken the concept of a monkey and given it enough of a twist so that it's not the same thing. Clearly like Mighty Man is the derivative character but what you've seen before, if given enough of a twist, it's a new entity in and of itself.

JM: *You've been doing individual Freak Force member back-ups in* ***Dragon****...*

EL: *Dragon* #5 has the last back-up in it.

JM: *Darn. You're not doing a Barbaric back-up?*

EL: I wanted to. I wanted to do a Barbaric/ Ricochet back-up because they're the team within the team.

JM: *The Larsen answer to Batman and Robin.*

EL: [Laughs] I wouldn't put it like that. More like they're my *Angel and the Ape*. I like those characters a lot. I like them visually and they sort of got their feature in the pages of *Dragon* as did Dart and Horridus. I'm trying to give enough of the characters here so that when you go and read *Freak Force* you're already somewhat familiar with the characters. The book so far is very focussed on Mighty Man and Superpatriot.

JM: *Okay, slightly away from that, do you know if Image has a multi-title crossover in the vein of* ***Secret Wars*** *or* ***Crisis on Infinite Earths*** *planned?*

EL: We've been talking about it off and on and it's something we'd like to do. It's one of those things that will be very difficult to coordinate when you've got a bunch of people who aren't making their deadlines. Rather than have parts 1, 5 and 9 come out before the rest, we've decided to first and foremost get our act together. We'd like to have it real together before attempting something like that. It would be much easier for us to all sit down and plot something out that is altogether separate like *Infinity Gauntlet* or something like that. That's a more plausible thing to do at this stage in the game.

JM: *People would love something like that, I think.*

EL: It would do okay. We've been talking about it. I'm hoping that we can get something like that out. In some cases it's tough simply because there haven't been enough appearances of the characters for us to have a feel for them. Todd and I have been talking about a Spawn/ Dragon crossover forever. At this point, it is something that will happen but...

JM: *There were hints of it earlier on in issues of* ***Spawn****, I believe, and Spawn has appeared in the pages of* ***Dragon*** *but he was in a trenchcoat and hat.*

EL: Yes. They will meet. I want to also have Dragon fight Pitt.

JM: *Visually, that would be excellent. If we could only get more issues of* ***Pitt*** *out!*

EL: Actually, *Pitt's* finally coming along great. In fact, I've got photocopies of issues #3 and #4 here. That book is going to be re-solicited and re-scheduled and it looks like it will be on time when that happens.

JM: *That's good. Dale Keown must've hit a big snag there.*

EL: There's a million excuses and all of them sound pathetic. I

don't know if I should start that up again. All of us have had excuses why for one reason or another we were late with our books.

JM: *Marc Silvestri explained to me that the main focus of it all is that before you guys were just one part of a company and that made the job easier but now you are your own company and you have tons more duties.*

EL: Absolutely. There's a hell of a lot to do. People do not realize the immensity of the task we've undertaken here. You can look in a Marvel comic book and see those lists of names and take all those names and the jobs associated with them and heap it all onto one person and it's like I just want to say, "Okay, now you do that." These people wouldn't know where to begin.

JM: *It seems like you're handling your duties rather well.*

EL: I'm insane.

JM: *Do you have a social life other than spending time with your wife?*

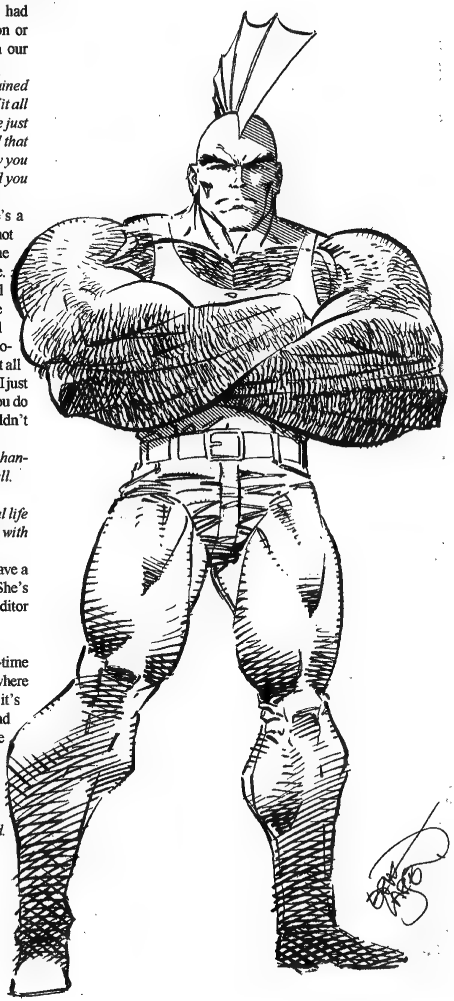
EL: [Chuckles] No. I have a wife and that's about it. She's listed in the book as the editor and...

JM: *Does she work?*

EL: Yeah. She has a full-time job. There's been instances where she's read the issue after it's been printed. She's that kind of an editor. In issue #6 she actually got to do her job a bit. There was some copy that she was able to help me with. She's great.

JM: *No more to be said. Thanks, Erik.*

EL: Anytime.



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Comic News Flash

EXTREME SANS IMAGE

Unidentified sources have announced that Extreme Studios has plans to publish creator-owned comic titles without Image Comics as their publisher. One of the first releases is Art Thibert's *Black and White* which is slated for a June release date. *Arena Magazine* was told simply that, "Rob's crazy like that... crazy as a fox!"

More information to follow as the news unfolds. Look for a tentative feature on Thibert's project in upcoming *Arena* #18.

Comic News

AMERICOMICS NEWS

MS. VICTORY FEMFORCE RING

Beginning in **FemForce** #69 and running for 7 consecutive months (**FemForce** #69 thru #76) the **FemForce Collector Ring Promotion** will be available only through coupons printed in the **AC Comics** flagship title. The rings can only be purchased with the actual coupon (no facsimiles) cut from the comics so you must purchase a comic in order to purchase a ring.

All **FemForce** members will be featured, with a release schedule of one per month. The FemForce's glamourous leader, Ms. Victory, will be the subject of ring sold in Januuary, 1994-- **FemForce** #69-- with Nightveil, She-Cat, Tara, Synn, Stardust, and Rad (due to reader popularity) to be made available in the following six months (#70 thru #76 of **FemForce**).

These precision detailed examples of collectible fingerware will be available in three separate formats, each in extremely limited editions! A general collector's edition cloisonne version, cast in non-precious metal for mass market; a silver edition limited to roughly 500 pieces for the more serious collector and a gold edition ring, limited to 100 units for the discriminating acquisitions expert. Pricing is as follows: Cloisonne Ring- $10.95; Silver Ring- $95.00; Gold Ring- $395.00.

These rings will *not* be solicited thru the direct market, and will *not* be available in comic stores or thru any other standard distribution channels. The only way the rings can be obtained is with a coupon clipped from the appropriate month's issue of **FemForce**, mailed with the purchase price to **The Great American Ring Club, Inc.** The rings will not be available without the coupons, and once again, facsimile coupons will not be accepted. So if you are interested in rings, you should reserve your copies of **FemForce** #69. To get additional rings in the set, be sure to also order **FemForce** #70-#76. Remember, you can only buy one Ms. Victory Ring per coupon and the coupon only appears in **FemForce** #69. If you want to buy 5 separate units of the same ring, you must buy 5 separate issues of the comic.

These rings are officially licensed to and produced by **The Great American Ring Club, Inc.** FemForce rings will be designed in the tradition of vintage rarities like the highly prized Superman, Green Hornet, and Shadow

rings of the Golden Age, and the very successful Spawn and Spider-Man rings of recent vintage. **The Great American Ring Club, Inc.** will be producing high quality cloisonne rings based on the popular FemForce characters.

CALIBER NEWS

BIG BANG

Premiering a new line from Caliber Press that will be a wholly self-contained universe which will bring 50 years of comic history together at the same time! This world starts off with three eras debuting simultaneously so readers can follow the realized history right from the beginning. Golden-Age characters will be seen and fans will be able to also see how they're holding up in modern times. Some characters will appear in three incarnations through-out the three eras (Golden-Silver-Modern) while others will exist only in a single era. This imprint is controlled by Gary Carlson who writes and co-created Image Comics' **Vanguard** title. All titles released under this line will be gradually released at no more than three titles a month for the next year. Already, a toy deal has been signed and look for the Big Bang action figures to be available in Toys R Us and Kay Bee Toys in mid 1994. A fan club will also be formed which will be the **Junior Watchman Club of America** and Big Bang will announce the details soon.

BIG BANG #1

The Zirconium Age of Comics is here! Experience the excitement of the Golden Age as this new imprint explodes on the comics scene introducing all of the Big Bang heroes in one 64 page giant. Paying homage to the classic comics of the past, this issue will run full color and you'll swear that its 1940 as you experience the thrilling adventures of Ultiman, Knight Watchman, Blitz, Thunder Girl, Dr. Weird, and many others. Every attempt will be made to capture the feel and look of a comic as it was printed in the 1940's. Aspects such as the coloring process, square-binding, cover stock, and interior pages will give fans of the older type of comics a brand new product that harkens those days long gone. Leading off the special debut issue is a cover by Golden Age great, Sheldon "Shelly" Moldoff of **Green Lantern** fame. The stories are written and illustrated by a variety of talents who were born 40 years too late. The second issue coming in two months will feature the Silver Age and the third issue will concentrate on the Modern Day versions of the Big Bang world. This series is highly recommended for fans of Golden and Silver Age comics.

DR. WEIRD SPECIAL #1

Featuring Jim Starlin art plus an all-new cover by Starlin! One of the mainstay characters of the Big Bang universe is the spiritual vengeance seeking entity known as Dr. Weird. This special will compile all of the material that originally appeared in **Star-Studded Comics** and features the early work of Jim Starlin! Fans of Starlin's work will notice the development of Starlin's style and the final story strongly resembles Jim's early Marvel work. Some of the stories are written by noted science fiction author George R. R. Martin. Follow the beginning exploits of Dr. Simon Ward, a time traveller from the future who ventures into the 1940's. However, once setting foot outside of his machine, he was murdered so his spirit has been denied access to eternal rest because his soul has not been born! Look for a brand new **Dr. Weird** series to debut from Big Bang in the next few months. 64 pages in black and white as it was originally presented!

CONTINUUM NEWS

FOODANG

Foodang is the story of one clown's fight for survival in a world gone mad. After he is hit by a truck carrying radioactive toilets, Foodang the clown is transformed into an isotopic powerhouse. The accident puts him in the hospital where he is conned into going home with a family of extradimensional beings named the Tylers. They convince him that he's their long lost 'Uncle Burt' and proceed to fatten him up for a terrible ritual which will open a multi-dimensional portal. After that, an army of

horrible creatures are supposed to come marching through and conquer the earth.

While staying with the Tylers, Foodang discovers his fantastic super powers! He also becomes embroiled in many savage battles with supervillain masterminds like Sigmund Fiend, Ruthless Megalomaniac from a far away alien world. His technology and generally deviant point of view make Sigmund very dangerous. That, and he is obsessed with the idea of conquering the planet one block at a time.

The Expectorator, Master of the Mucal Membrane and a core member of the frighteningly revolting Brotherhood of Evil Excretions. Expectorator clashes with Foodang while trying to manipulate the powerful media magnate Ethel E. Rex. By using his awesome and disgusting sinal powers on her, he hopes to take control of several TV satellites--thereby ruling the airwaves.

Foodang also makes friends and allies within the Superhero Community. He becomes associated with 'Strikepose: Gamma', and group of squabbling superheroes. Their constant sniping, pretension, and egotistical banter make them one of the most notoriously undependable teams around. Eventually, Foodang finds himself forced to lead this pack of morons to glory for the powers of good.

Foodang is slated to be a 4-issue b/w mini-series from Continuum Comics.

CRY FOR DAWN NEWS

EVIL ERNIE JOINS CAST OF NIGHTCRY

Co-Publishers Joseph M. Monks and Everette Hartsoe have announced that Brian Pulido's contribution to **NightCry** #1 will be an original Evil Ernie story.

Written by Pulido and illustrated by Chaos Studios' Leonardo Jiminez (who'll be working on Pulido's **Rack & Pain**, a 4-issue mini to be published by Dark Horse early in '94), the tale will be entitled *Alien Evil*, and will center on Ernie in a totally, well, alien surrounding.

Evil Ernie is currently selling like wildfire for Pulido's publishing company, the recently formed **Chaos Comics**. The numbers have been fantastic for **Evil Ernie** the mini-series, and a **Lady Death** mini is on the way. *Alien Evil*, a story along the lines of a "What If?" concept, will not be any sort of crossover, or affect the continuity of the Chaos books, stresses Monks.

"I don't want people to have any misconceptions, none whatsoever," said Monks. "The whole purpose of **NightCry** is to supply the independent fan with material from his favorite creators. We have no urge whatsoever to try and entangle **NightCry** in any way with books by the publishers we're involved with. All the creators and publishers' storylines are retaining complete autonomy. It isn't like we're trying to get the people who're buying **Evil Ernie** or **Razor** or any of the other titles to need **NightCry** to keep up with current storylines. We're wholly outside that."

NightCry #1, planned for 64 pages for $3.95, will be released the weekend of February 11th, 12th, and 13th, at the Great Eastern ComicCon in New York City.

DC NEWS

SUPERMOMENTUM

Superboy is busting loose in his own ongoing series, as the Metropolis Kid relocates to Hawaii for a change of scenery following the tumultuous events in Reign of the Supermen. But his quiet time in paradise is short-lived when Superboy confronts a three-armed villain with a score to settle. It seems that somehow, somewhere, these two combatants have met before, and this rematch may tear up all Honolulu. Adventures of Superman writer Karl Kesel and former Adventures artists Tom (Robin) Grummett and Doug Hazelwood form the creative team for what is sure to be one of the hottest new books of the year.

Steel is another ongoing series rocketing into stores in the wake of Reign of the Supermen, as John Henry Irons heads for Washington, DC to start his life anew. But his mysterious past continues to haunt him, and in a wave of violence that's pursued him home, the former Superman is again compelled to take up his hammer, forge a suit of powered armor, and assume the new mantle of Steel. Writers Jon Bogdanove and Louise Simonson (the creative team on Superman: Man of Steel) are joined by the bold new art team of penciller Chris Batista and inker Rich Faber.

Rounding out the Reign of

Tomorrow is **Supergirl**, a 4-issue miniseries spinning out of Reign of the Supermen that begins as the Girl of Steel starts to realize that Lex Luthor II may not be the noble soul he's led her to believe he is. Lex's odd behavior leads Supergirl to uncover a terrible secret, one he's been keeping from her since Doomday's rampage. From that point it's Supergirl unleashed--as the Girl of Steel's discovery sends her into a berserker rage that threatens Luthor's very life--unless Superman can protect him. **Supergirl** is written by Roger (**Action Comics**) Stern with pencils by June (**Supergirl/Team Luthor**) Brigman and inks by Jackson (**Action Comics**) Guice.

Superman and Batman, two of the hottest heroes in comics today, join forces in **Legends of the World's Finest**, an untold tale of nightmarish terror with a foil-embossed cover on every issue of this 3-part miniseries. When Silver Banshee and the ancient entity Tullus unite against the demonic Blaze, the Man of Steel and the Dark Knight are unknowingly drawn into a web of arcane intrigue that causes them to dream each other's dreams while the villains battle in the Netherworld. This infernal scheme may cost both heroes their souls, as their nocturnal visions affect each other's waking minds and threaten their very sanity. Walter (**Superman Special**) Simonson writes this landmark story, with fully-painted art by Dan (**Psycho**) Brereton.

BATMAN FACES THE MASK OF THE PHANTASM

Tying in with the Christmas release of Warner Bors. Animation's **Batman: Mask of the Phantasm**-- The Animated Movie, DC offers a lineup of sensational titles to take full advantage of the excitement surrounding this eagerly anticipated feature-length theatrical cartoon.

First up is the official adaptation, **Batman: Mask of the Phantasm**-- The Animated Movie, by writer Kelley Puckett with art by Mike Parobeck and Rick Burchett, the creative team behind the Batman Adventures. In it, Batman confronts a mysterious new vigilante who has begun assassinating the gangsters of Gotham City. The killer is Phantasm, a terrifying villain who may hold an important key to the Dark Knight's past in this shocking tale of twisted revenge. Offered in two great editions, the first is in the Prestige Format, with a beautiful painted cover by Batman animation artist/producer Bruce Timm. The other edition is offered in the Standard Format, with a cover by Parobeck and Burchett.

A NEW HERO WILL WEAR THE RING!

It's the shocking climax of the 3-part Emerald Twilight saga in the double-sized, landmark 50th issue of Green Lantern. Featuring a striking glow-in-the-dark cover that shows Hal Jordan's exciting new costume, this pivotal issue marks a devastating turning point in the history of the Green Lantern Corps and send the series rocketing in a startling new direction with an all-new Green Lantern.

It began with the destruction of Coast City in Reign of Supermen, an event that took place in **Green Lantern** #45 and **Superman** #80, and over which Green Lantern Hal Jordan fought a titanic battle in **Green Lantern** #46 and **Superman** #82. Consumed by grief and guilt, Jordan embarked on a desperate quest for power-- one that would lead him to destroy the noble and ancient Green Lantern Corps.

Now with the Corps shattered, the Guardians of the Universe are compelled to reinstate the villainous Sinestro as a Green Lantern in order to stop Jordan

when Jordan kills Sinestro. Entering Oa's giant power battery, the man who had been the greatest of the Green Lantern sheds the trappings of his old life as he becomes something more. Now the fading Guardians have time only to take one final gamble-- using the last of their power to find a new ring bearer.

Green Lantern #50 is by regular writer Ron (Silver Surfer) Marz and features the action-packed art of penciller Darryl (Legion of Super-Heroes) Banks and Green Lantern inker Romeo Tanghal. Plus this issue features pinups of Hal Jordan by artists Jeff Johnson, Stuart Immonen, Tom Rainey, Joe Phillips, and others.

RIPPED FROM HIS ROOTS

DC's Earth Elemental branches out in an unexpected direction with issue #140 of Swamp Thing.

Swamp Thing holds an important place in the history of Vertigo. It's the title where sophisticated storytelling, exquisite artwork, and a new sensibility first combined to capture reader attention, changing the tone of comics forever. Co-writer Grant (Doom Patrol) Morrison joins the new regular creative team of writer Mark (2000 AD) Millar and penciller Phillip (Vertigo Jam) Hester, along with dramatic new cover artist John Mueller. Together they offer a wild new approach to this award-winning title.

The entire Swamp Thing mythos is turned inside out when Dr. Alec Holland awakens in a South American hospital, sweating and disoriented from a terrible nightmare in which he shambled through swamps as an Earth Elemental. Then he remembers the truth: He overdosed on organic plant hallucinogens during one of his experiments in plant chemistry and has experienced fever dreams ever since. Yet he somehow feels a strange connection to the silver-haired woman named Abigail Arcane... and to the savage, murderous Swamp Thing rumored to be running amok through Louisiana, killing scores of people.

This dynamic storyline redefines the character of Swamp Thing and makes the perfect starting point for new readers, also laying the groundwork for a very different series direction. Co-writer Morrison is certain to shake up things in Swamp Thing as dramatically as he did with his innovative work on Animal Man and Doom Patrol.

DEFIANT NEWS

ALL-STAR FANTASY ART CALENDAR

Jim Starlin has brought together an all-star cast for an impressive fantasy-art collection. This full-color, 11-inch by 8 1/2-inch, 1994 wall calendar has 13 conceptual plates by many of the biggest names in comics to be released by Defiant. All proceeds of the calendar go to **Family**, a charitable organization in Woodstock, NY, which serves as a shelter and soup kitchen for the homeless and provides assistance in cases of domestic violence.

The artists are the following: John Byrne, Tom Grindberg, Jeffrey Jones, Charles Vess, Angel Medina, Michael Ploog, Tom Raney, Marc Silvestri, Walt Simonson, Jim Starlin, Michael William Kaluta, Barry Windsor-Smith, and Bernie Wrightson.

ECLIPSE NEWS

A NEW ECLIPSE ON THE HORIZON

As the new year fast approaches, Eclipse Comics is planning some new developments in their line-up in order to regain the status they held in previous years.

"Our slogan for next year is going to be 'Hear us roar in '94!', 'cause we're going to get back that market share," said Eclipse Vice-President of Sales and Marketing Beau Smith. "We used to be at number three solid for years, and we want to get that back."

Smith will be more involved in the editorial directions of the company in 1994, along with Publisher Dean Mullaney. They plan to bring back some of their previously successful titles, and introduce some brand new projects. The first new title is a long-running project for Eclipse, **Miracleman Triumphant**, debuting in January.

"It's a new monthly Miracleman title to go along with Neil Gaiman

and Mark Buckingham's **Miracleman** book," Smith said. "Their book– restarting in January– will go back to what we hope is a bimonthly schedule. **Miracleman Triumphant** is by Fred Burke, who has written various Clive Barker adaptations for us, and artist Mike Deadoto who has done painted covers for Innovation. **Miracleman Triumphant** will be coming out monthly, so every month you'll have one to two books of Miracleman.

"In the spring, you'll see the return of Airboy in **Aviator X: The New Adventures of Airboy**. There's a new costume, he's a little older, and he's not as happy as he used to be, partly because he comes back and finds Valkyrie and Sky Wolf have been fooling around while he's been gone. This picks up a few years after issue #50, and Chuck Dixon will be writing the series again."

Eclipse will also produce some new **Black Terror** projects, including a regular mini-series written by Smith, the **Black Terror and the Mark** crossover with Dark Horse, cowritten by Chuck Dixon and Smith, and a painted one-shot **Black Terror** book due in the fall of next year. They will also release the collection of the first **Black Terror** mini-series just before the new mini-series starts next spring.

"This summer we'll introduce the **G.R.I.P.**, which stands for Genetically Rearranged Individual Patterns," Smith added. "It's not going to be 'Eclipse's new universe.' Just a new book, with new characters that's really going to focus in more on the characters' lives, and how they do fight crime with an actual personal life."

The **G.R.I.P.** is about heroes and villains who were all terminally ill children treated by a doctor who developed an injection that not only cures the disease, but gives the added side-effect of better eyesight, stronger bones, and immunity to disease at a natural, normal level. However, the side-effects are far greater than the doctor planned. Twenty years later, the villains want to locate the doctor-- who has gone into seclusion-- to acquire the serum and make more people like themselves. Meanwhile, The GRIP forms to protect the doctor, and help him redevelop the serum so it will work as originally planned.

"Towards the end of the year, we'll introduce some characters that tie into the whole Eclipse universe– some superheroes that on one has seen for awhile that we've negotiated the rights for," Smith added. "These heroes have nothing to do with Eclipse's past. I can't say a lot now, but its actually going to tie in with all these books I've mentioned, and at the end of the year, bang! You'll see a big meeting of the muscle. It's going to surprise a lot of people. It's going to make people go into stores looking for back issues of some certain comics."

IMAGE NEWS

HOW'S YER KINFOLK?

The Kindred, an exciting new comic book created by Jim Lee, ties together elements from almost every Homage Studios series to date.

The year, 1974. The place, Moreau Labs, Wells Island, Southeast Pacific. International Operations (I/O) performs secret gene-splicing experiments on animals on this unknown island. Then public attention focuses on intelligence operations, and I/O is forced to abandon the controversial project and the island.

It is now 1994. John Lynch, director of I/O, and his assistant have been kidnapped by unknown assailants. All clues point back to the abandoned labs of Wells Island.

Old favors are called in and *StormWatch's* Backlash and the WildCATS' Grifter, along with a Black Razor team, are summoned to try to rescue the captives. In their bloody attempt, secret connections are revealed between major players in the Homage corner of the Image universe, as the horrors of Wells Island come to light. No *WildCATS*, *StormWatch*, or *GEN 13* fan is going to want to be without this four issue mini-series.

The first issue of **The Kindred** ships in March. Pencils are by **Brett Booth**, whose WildCATS #0 drew rave reviews. Inks are by talented newcomer **Sal Regla**. The story is by **Jim Lee, Brett Booth**, and **Sean Ruffner**, with a script by **Ruffner**, who also cowrote the script for *StormWatch* #4 and #5.

SOMETIMES IT'S HEAVEN, SOMETIMES IT'S HELL.

As announced earlier, noted Arkham Asylum writer **Grant Morrison** and sizzling former X-Force perncciller **Greg Capullo,** will be taking over the steering wheel of **Todd McFarlane's Spawn** while McFarlane is working on the upcoming Spawn-Batman crossover. It promises to make issues #16, #17, and #18 one hell of a ride.

The Anti-Spawn has taken over the guise of Al Simmons' old boss Jason Wynn. This leads Spawn into a battle of mega proportions with the Anti-Spawn. A battle that will most certainly guarantee a true victor. But, as we all know, every victory has it's price. The question is how high a price is truly worth a victory?

There will also be a major development in the relationship between Al and his former wife, Wanda. You ask, how can there be a relationship between a living woman and a dead guy? The answer is revealed within the pages of Spawn. See how true love can seep through the thickest of walls to find it's destination.

Artist **Greg Capullo** is very excited about getting into the dark, demon riddled world of Spawn. "I'm havin' a ball with all of the demons and darkness that surrounds Spawn and those connected with him. I've kinda come full circle. My first work was doin' up corpse and demon like things for Fantaco's **Gore Shriek.** As we all know, Spawn is King Corpse!," Capullo said with a demonic laugh. "Todd has opened up a portal of opportunity for me with Spawn and I am more than happy to make the leap through," Capullo added.

YOUNGBLOOD CARTOON DEBUTS IN '94

Beginning in September 1994, Rob Liefeld's **Youngblood** chararcters will star in their own animated series. Liefeld's partner in this bold new venture is **Roustabout**, a newly formed animation company make up of six veteran animation artists whose past work includes **Batman: The Animated Series, X-Men**, and others.

Liefeld says that he was negotiating with several animation companies, but that Roustabout's presentation "really blew me away." Liefeld is also quick to point out that he will retain complete ownership of his characters, which was not an option with the other animation companies.

"What Roustabout is doing in animation is exactly what [Image] did in comics-- breaking from the corporate structure to master their own destiny," says Liefeld. "They're very familiar with the **Youngblood** characters and very excited about making this the event of the 1994-95 season."

"We have stuff planned that is absolutely groundbreaking in scope," says Nick Dubois, spokesperson for Roustabout. "Not only in terms of the animation itself, but in terms of marketing and distribution."

"We are very close to signing a network deal and we expect to make an announcement soon," Liefeld says.

While Liefeld and the Extreme editors are currently writing a story "bible" for the series, the **Youngblood** roster they are working with include Badrock, Sentinel, Shaft, Diehard, Vogue, Riptide, Chapel, and Troll. Work has already begun on the series and a two-minute promotional short will be available to the public sometime before Christmas.

MILLER WRITES BATMAN/SPAWN

In a surprise move, Todd McFarlane has formally announced that Batman specialist Frank Miller will write the **Batman/Spawn** bookshelf format one-shot, set to ship in late February. Miller will both plot and write the one-shot, while McFarlane will work only as the artist. "It's Frank's gig. I'm just there for feedback."

Although this special crossover is not connected with any regular continuity, the very idea that Miller, who wrote Batman in his highly acclaimed *Batman: Year One* storyline in 1987, would return to the character is very exciting.

The plot of the crossover is still a secret, but McFarlane is quick to say, "Don't expect it to be deep or psychological. It'll just be something that, when you read it, will be really cool."

Some fans might recall that the program for the 1993 Philadelphia Comicfest Debate between McFarlane and Peter David contained a one-page teaser which hinted that Miller was connected to the project. "Frank and I knew we would be doing this for about six months now," McFarlane confesses. "I had to keep something secret about this [project]."

MALIBU NEWS

PROTOTYPE COMMERCIAL FOR TELEVISION

Capitalizing on the business subtext of its hot new Ultraverse title **Prototype**, Malibu Comics just released its latest television commercial on CNN and the "E" Channel.

Prototype is a story about one technology company, UltraTech, and what happens when they develop an Ultra-hero to be their front man. Written by Tom Mason and Len Strazewski and drawn by David Ammerman and James Pascoe, Prototype explores the dangers and possibilities of big business gone super-hero, and the consequences for everyone involved.

"Seeing **Prototype** on TV makes me realize that what we've only been imagining in the comic could actually become a reality," said Strazewski. "It makes Prototype and the Ultraverse that much more real because the ads will alert a whole new level of audience to Prototype, one of the first comic books to capture the attention of adults and business."

"We recognize the power of television to bring new readers into the direct market," Editor-In-Chief Chris Ulm said. "Malibu is committed to spending its marketing money wisely to increase the entire comic audience."

This is the second time Malibu has used television to spread the word about the Ultraverse. The first time was during the launch of the Ultraverse in June. "The commercials have been very successful for us," Ulm said, "and we're definitely doing more of them in the future." All Malibu commericials are produced by the Malibu Films division of Malibu Comics. The Prototype commercial follows earlier TV ads for the Ultraverse on cable stations like MTV and the Sci-Fi Channel.

So keep an eye out for the Ultraverse titles appearing everywhere, in stores, on TV and even in film later this fall.

ULTRAVERSE SOFTWARE

Davidson & Associates, Inc. today announced **CD-ROMIX!**, a new affiliate label line of CD-ROM products. This software will offer the adventures of comic heroes Prime, Hardcase, and Freex from the best-selling Ultraverse line of Malibu Comics. These stories will be highlighted by brilliant, high-resolution graphics; real-life character voices; original music; special graphic effects; and dynamic sound effects. Each **CD-ROMIX!** title will also contain a "behind-the-scenes" look at the making of the software.

The first three **CD-ROMIX!** titles-- **Prime #1, Hardcase #1,** and **Freex #1**-- will be available

A SHOCKING EXPERIENCE!

TEMPERED STEELE

Bob Hickey, Dennis Feeback, Don Hillsman, Bill Nichols, Dwayne Haddix

SKY COMICS

MARCH 1993

Sacred Grounds

in MPC CD-ROM format in most computer and software retail stores, comic book stores, and mass merchant outlets by the end of the year. Each will have a suggested retail price of $24.95 and an average shelf price under $20.

Says Bob Davidson, chairman and CEO of Davidson & Associates, Inc., "The **CD-ROMIX!** titles offer a way to experience their favorite comic stories. Superior graphics and characterization make these best-selling comic book heroes so realistic! We are excited to work with Malibu Comics, whose Ultraverse comic book titles have been rated by Entertainment This Month as the 'most successful new releases of the year.'"

Adds Scott Rosenberg, president and CEO of Malibu Comics, "The creation of the **CD-ROMIX!** line of products expands the market for Malibu Comics, since we believe this software will appeal both to traditional comic book readers and computer users. Offering leading-edge, high-quality audio and video technologies will result in first-rate CD-ROM versions of our comics."

CD-ROMIX! titles are being jointly developed by Davidson and Malibu Comics. Malibu Comics, a division of Malibu Entertainment, Inc., is based in Westlake Village, California. The company focuses on the creation, licensing and publishing of comic book properties, and has published hundreds of comics including their super-hero titles as well as licensed ones such as *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*.

Davidson & Associates, Inc., based in Torrance, California, is best-known for its educational software such as *Math Blaster* and Davidson's *KidWorks2*. The company also offers text-to-speech technologies with its First Byte division; school software distribution via the company's independently run Educational Resources division; entertainment software from affiliated label company members such as Maxis and 3DI Productions; and now innovative comic book creations with **CD-ROMIX!**

MALIBU AND BRAVURA ANNOUNCE NEW TITLE

The Germans are hot with cars and the Japanese are great with stereos, but nobody makes a superhero like the good ol' USA!

As the American Century draws to a close, image has replaced reality in the fabric of American life. Today, you don't have to be a hero– just look like one!

In an attempt to franchise the American spirit of rugged individualism through a comic book character come to life, Malcolm Lestrange, chief of the internal affairs division of the NIA creates Project: American Powerhouse Experiment, codenamed A-Pex. "Make me a superman... and make us all heroes!" exudes Lestrange.

So begins **Power and Glory**, the new Bravura title from Malibu Comics and creator Howard Chaykin. **Power and Glory**, Chaykin's foray into the world of superheroes, is a four-issue mini-series, written and illustrated by the artist best known for his work on **American Flagg!**, **Time2**, and his revivals of **The Shadow** and **Blackhawk**.

According to Tom Mason, Malibu Comics' Creative Director and Line Editor for Bravura. "If anyone can turn the superhero mythos inside out, it's Howard Chaykin. **Power and Glory** is Chaykin in top form-- a story that's exciting and challenging and artwork that is Chaykin at his best."

In **Power and Glory #1**, meet Allan Powell, the perfect candidate for truth, justice, and the American way, and Michael Gorski, his trainer. Gorski is "cursed" with guts, integrity, and character, appalled by the same easy fixes, quick pick-me-ups and cardboard heroes that make up a man like Powell.

Powell might harbor inner reservations, but Gorski is completely fearless. Where Gorski lacks the finesse of politically correct people-pleasing, Powell wins crowds over with a simple baking soda smile. They couldn't have less in common, but together they create one nearly indestructible superhero.

"Gorski hates the very idea of heroes," said Chaykin, "and Powell hates Gorski. They despise each other from the very moment they meet, on the job and off duty. But the country really wants a hero and in less than 24 hours, Powell has signed con-

tracts for over $200 million in licensing and merchandising. But his victory is a two-edged sword."

The all-American boy, the first official U.S. Government superhero is a screw-up. In the face of danger, he turns tail, live on video. "He's a lummox, a coward, and an embarrassment to the program," said Chaykin.

Lestrange assigns Gorski to Powell "as a ninja baby-sitter" to do all the work Powell gets credit for. Powell teaches Gorski the advantage of a lie and a smile--Gorski make Powell a better man--"Even the hero he claims to be," said Chaykin.

Joining Chaykin on **Power and Glory** will be letterer Ken Bruzenak and colorist Richard Ory. Ory, best known for is work on DC's **The Golden Age** series, will be hand-coloring each individual panel. "The reason I'm doing **Power and Glory** is that Howard wants me to color everything he does from here on," Ory said. "We've worked on stuff from **Time2, American Flagg!**, and **Blackhawk** to the Nick Fury/ Wolverine graphic novel, **The Scorpio Connection.**"

Power and Glory is a four-issue monthly mini-series debuting from Malibu Comics' Bravura imprint. **Power and Glory** is recommended for mature readers.

BRAVURA™

POWER & Glory™

Marvel News

FIRST ANNUAL MARVEL COMICS SCHOLAR

In keeping with its commitment to nurture aspiring artists and perpetuate excellence in the comic medium, Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. has established the Marvel Comics Scholarship at the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, Inc., the only fully accredited institution in the world devoted exclusively to the art of cartooning.

The recipient of the first annual Marvel Comics Scholarship, which includes full tuition for the Kubert School's three-year program as well as an apprenticeship at Marvel Comics, is Brandon Vietti. The selection of the 19-year-old resident of Fresno, California was made by a group of judges, including renowned cartoonist Joe Kubert, and based largely on art samples submitted during the standard application process.

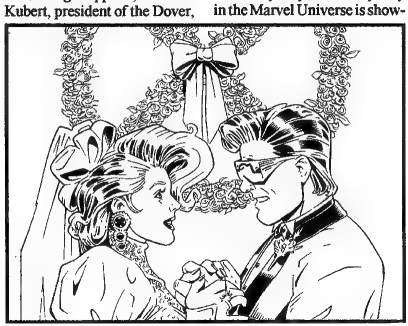
"With this ongoing support from Marvel, each year we will be able to offer a deserving individual like Brandon the opportunity to hone the skills essential to success in any field where cartooning is applied," said Joe Kubert, president of the Dover, New Jersey-based school. "We're very grateful for this generous endowment from Marvel which reflects our shared passion for cartooning."

"There is no better training ground for a career in cartooning than the Kubert School," said Terry Stewart, Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc., and a comic book devotee from the tender age of three. "We're happy that Marvel is able to play a practical role in helping some of these talented students realize their dreams."

Founded in 1976 by Kubert and his wife, Muriel, the Joe Kubert School has grown from its original enrollment of twenty-two students to its current enrollment of three hundred. Housed in what was once Dover High School, the school boasts a faculty that includes many of the most experienced and accomplished cartoonists in the world today.

GOING TO THE CHAPEL

January marks the **X-Men** event of the year, the long-awaited marriage of Jean Grey and Scott Summers! These two have been dating long enough to know if it's the real thing, don't you think? The blessed event occurs in **X-Men** #30, and everybody who's anybody in the Marvel Universe is show-



ing up for this gala! To help commemorate this special occassion, you'll find an exclusive 3 card insert in **Uncanny X-Men** #310, **Marvel Age** #134, and **X-Men** #30! These cards are not available anywhere else, so make sure you have them-- they're great keepsake momentos of the wedding.

A 32-page magazine commemorating the biggest wedding since Chuck and Di's hits racks in January, as well. Printed on glossy stock, **X-Men: The Many Loves of Jean and Scott** boasts a beautiful cover by Richard Bennett. In addition to new and reprinted art, new stories, reprinted highlights, and pinups galore, the magazine will feature never-before-revealed information about the first encounter between Jean and Professor Xavier. **X-Men: The Many Loves of Jean and Scott** also includes scenes of the bachelor and bachelorette parties and, of course, the wedding itself!

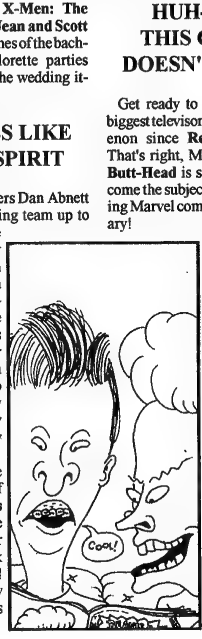
SMELLS LIKE TEAM SPIRIT

Punisher writers Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning team up to write **Force Works**, a major new series from Marvel, which premieres January. **Force Works** features pencils by major new talent, Tom Tenney, who revolutionary style Nel Yomtov says "will blow readers away."

The 48-page premier issue of **Force Works** will also include a pop-up cover that will knock you off your feet! When Tony Stark approaches the dejected former members of the Avengers with an idea for another partnership, a new super-hero team is born! The Scarlet Witch, Wonder Man, and USAgent team up with a new super-hero, Century, to become a hard-hitting super hero team who are headed straight into the Marvel mainstream. Remember, these heroes are not Avengers anymore! Tony Stark plays a big part in this series, outfitting USAgent in a new, state-of-the-art costume and setting up an immense computer system to track galactic goings-on. Force Works go head-to-head with the Kree in the premiere issue when the villians return to avenge the happenings in **Avengers West Coast** #101 and #102.

HUH-HUH, THIS COMIC DOESN'T SUCK

Get ready to cash in on the biggest televison series phenomenon since **Ren & Stimpy**! That's right, MTV's **Beavis & Butt-Head** is scheduled to become the subject of a new ongoing Marvel comic book in January!



Beavis and Butt-Head, the oddball stars of MTV's chartbusting cartoon, are so popular that when they recently appeared on the cover of **Rolling Stone**, the magazine was a top-seller. **Beavis & Butt-Head** will be written by Mike (**Punisher Back to School Special**) Lackey and pencilled by Rick (**Boss Men**) Parker.

For those of you who've seen the cartoon, you know that Beavis and Butt-Head spend a good part of the half-hour making fun of various music videos currently enjoying heavy airplay. In the comic, these scatological misfits will keep busy by roasting a selection of Marvel comics! Beavis and Butt-Head's comic reviews will alternate with the duo's adventures. In the first issue alone, they'll visit the dentist, with hilarious results!

MARVEL COMICS, NFL TEAM-UP FOR "PRO ACTION"

The Super Heroes of Marvel Comics and the National Football League come together yet again in the pages of **Pro Action** magazine, a joint effort of the Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. and NFL Properties, Inc. which targets pre-teens and teenagers with a broad mix of pop culture, trends, NFL-related topics, and comics.

This 70-page magazine, set to debut with a Super Bowl special edition in January, features personality profiles of players and coaches; fashion features; training tips; news, notes, and ancedotes; and interactive features, including quizzes, games, and puzzles. The highlight of the magazine, though, will be a 16-page custom comic featuring Super Heroes from the Marvel Universe crossing over with players from the NFL! Each issue will also include a Fleer Ultra trading card insert of both NFL Superstars and Marvel's Mightiest Heroes!

Michael Hobson, group vice president, publishing, for Marvel Comics is quick to point out that the two audiences target the same audience, and that a unification of football and comics could be beneficial to not

only Marvel and the NFL, but also to the retailers, who market both sports cards and superhero cards. "Comics and the NFL are big business for the teen market," he explains, "and Pro Action will provide advertisers with a totally unique opportunity to reach young people through a highly targeted publication."

John Wiesbusch, vice president and editor-in-chief of all NFL Properties' publications, agrees with Mr. Hobson. "Nothing holds a kid's interest more than comics and the NFL," he says, "by 'colliding' them into a magazine with a pop culture spin, our readers will get the best of both worlds."

This is certainly true of the first issue, which features a cover and a profile on Super Bowl XXVII MVP Troy Aikman, as well as a 16-page comic in which the X-Men, led by Wolverine, meet the Los Angeles Raider's Howie Long.

The magazine retails for $2.95, and will begin regular publication in the summer of 1994.

MARVEL UK: THE SECRET'S OUT

This month, Marvel UK is proud to present Alan Davis' **The ClanDestine**, a new limited series written and drawn by the celebrated creative team of Alan Davis and Mark Farmer. Their first project together since **Excalibur**, Alan Davis' **The ClanDestine** promises to provide the expert blend of action, intrigue, and humor that fans have come to expect from Alan and Mark. The team's emphasis on good storytelling ensures a solid read with the visual pyrotechnics that have become their stock in trade.

The word is: **The ClanDestine** will be darker and more violent in tone than **Excalibur**, but there'll still be an element of

absurd humor.

The four-issue limited series will be supported by a special preview comic scheduled to ship in December and fanzine advertising.

Pino Rinaldi, the newest member of the Marvel UK family, makes his debut this month as the artist on **Wild Angels**. The Italian-based artist has teamed with writer Nick Vince to bring together two of Marvel UK's hottest heroes from across time and space in a 4-issue limited series.

Dark Angel and Wild Thing are flung together when a faulty virtual reality game collides with a dark and mysterious MyS-TECH experiment. The two titans are torn from their respective surroundings of 1994 Scotland and 2020 New York only to arrive in Guildern, another plane of reality chock full of evil for the displaced duo to battle.

Marvel UK's third offering this month is **Loose Cannons**; this fully-painted four-issue limited series features the debut of Loose Cannons, the all-woman Warheads merc squad! When they bring their own brand of firepower to a planetful of propagating insect aliens they come back with an unexpected souvenir: a deadly bacteria that horribly deforms any human it touches! So what will their bosses do? Bottle it, label it "food" and sell it to the starving masses! The Loose Cannons set out to right the wrong they've brought to the world, and they're not alone in their mission! They're joined by Death's Head II, that lovable android with the killer charisma! Along the way the crew runs into more insectoid alien hordes and the Kree, Shi'Ar and Skrull alliance, 'cause it just wouldn't have been a long enough story otherwise!

Mu News

IT'S BACK!

One of the most popular funny animal titles ever published, Vicky Wyman's **Xanadu** was a fan favorite.

Her newest tale has all the elements that will apeal to today's reader: dinosaurs, pirates, unicorns, and all the high adventure Vicky Wyman's fans have come to know and love.

The queen of the dragons is

celebrating her one-thousandth birthday, and Empress Alicia and her retinue are invited to the party! Naturally, she'll need a new captain of her guard; and just as naturally she chooses Tabbe LeFauve, the handsome cat who exposed her scheming captain in the first series. His delight turns to dismay when he finds out the dragons live on an island, accessible only by sea.

If he only knew the adventures they'd all see, from battling dinosaurian barbarians to contesting mysterious magicians, he'd be downright terrified!

Xanadu returns in January, 1994 from MU Press. The five issue black-and-white series will appear monthly.

New England News

The Chainsaw Vigilante has defeated all of the city's superheroes. Meanwhile, a tumor has caused a man to grow to the size of a building and the press has branded him a menace.

Can the Chainsaw Vigilante deal with the Tumor-Man as well as the dozens of criminals now pillaging the city without resorting to enlisting the aid of the heroes he has vanquished?

STARRING THE TICK!

Part two of the four-part crossover between the characters of **Paul the Samurai, Man-Eating Cow,** and guest-starring **The Tick**!

The story line picks up from **Paul the Samurai #9** with The Tick, Paul and others returning from Japan in pursuit of the now undead Sagin. Man-Eating Cow has now entered the fray-- will she deal with Sagin in her own inimitable manner?

Revolutionary News

STUDIO G MERGER OFF

Revolutionary Comics sincerely regrets that they will not be publishing Daerick Gross' Studio G titles, despite several weeks of planning, soliciting and paid advertising. Revolutionary may still pick up one or more of the Studio G titles, but Daerick Gross will be shopping his six to seven titles around individually, to other publishers.

There are various reasons why the alliance between Revolutionary and Studio G could not be completed. "At first," says Revolutionary Managing Editor Jay Allen Sanford, "we did not know of the various terms and conditions which had been promised by Studio G's previous publisher. Many of them were at odds with systems at Revolutionary." Also, the Studio G books were already running very late, production-wise, when Revolutionary entered the picture. "We'd hoped we could get the schedule back on track, as many of the titles were close to having their orders cancelled by distributors," notes Revolutionary Publisher Herb Shapiro. "Unfortunately, as negotiations of terms between Revolutionary and Studio G took much longer than expected, Daerick's books got even later, and we saw no way to ever get them shipping in a timely manner. Rather than spend even more advertising dollars and resoliciting the entire line, we opted to withdraw our offer to publish the Studio G books."

Daerick Gross and Revolutionary will still be doing occassional work together, and there is still the possibility of Revolutionary publishing one or more of Daerick Gross' properties in the near future. At the present time, there are two Studio G titles with the Revolutionary imprint which have been published-- **Murcielaga She-Bat #3** and **Reiki Warriors #1**. Status on the other issues and Studio G titles (cancellations, resolicits, publisher, etc.) will be announced soon.

Sky Comics News

Seeker Ongoing

February heralds the release of the **Seeker** ongoing series from Sky Comics. Joe Martin's creation was the first color title shipped from this new publishing phenomenon and the book completely sold through. "It did well enough that we're going to try our chances at an ongoing series," said Publisher Mike Hickey. "Joe approached me and told me he wanted to do a regular series with the character and it didn't take long for me to agree."

"I've got a story to tell," explained Martin. There are an array of stories in mind for this character with a rich history. Seeker is not the first to be "possessed" by the spirit of an ancient sorcerer from fabled Atlantis. "Although I will be dealing with Tracy LeMaster as Seeker, I'm going to address far much more than that as the story unfolds."

The initial story arc is illustrated by Canadian artist, Raff Ienco. It runs through the first two issues and is a fast-paced romp that hints at some of Seeker's past and places her in combat with a mysterious foe in an unearthly setting, the biblical Purgatory. Following this, *Vengeance* miniseries and Malibu artist, Willie Peppers returns to illustrate one issue for **Seeker** #3 and then Tennessee Madman, Tyler Bishop, lends his artistic abilities for a two-issue story arc in **Seeker** #4 and #5 entitled "The Dark Night."

"From that point," explains Martin, "the story will really gear up. Some new characters will be introduced, and some old ones will return."

Look for the **Seeker** ongoing series in February from Sky Comics.

Electrifying New Hero

"The Sky Universe has superheroes, too," says Creative Director and **Tempered Steele** creator, Bob Hickey. "It's true. You almost have to have a resident super hero in tights if you want the readership. We're aiming for a mainstream audience, although it's not exactly 'mainstream' per se. What we want to do is hit that same audience who enjoyed the old Claremont, Byrne and Miller era of the 80s as well as the new Liefeld, Lee and Silvestri era of the 90s."

By the way, that resident superhero is called Tempered Steele. His actual name is Kevin Steele, a teenaged yuppie-ish corporate leader with a "pretty boy" smile and a jock's attitude. Granted his powers by otherworldly aliens, Kevin's life is thrown awhirl by the events unfolding around him. Before he realizes what's going on, he's decked out in tights and duking it out with a villain who's hired to kill him!

This story was actually roughed out by Hickey and then presented to Malibu's **Streetfighter** artist Don Hillsman, who readily accepted. "The character is really exciting," said Hillsman. "I finally get to cut loose and do what I wanted to do -- superheroes."

"My goal for Steele is to make him THE superhero for Sky Comics," said Hickey. "When you think of Marvel's main hero, it's Spider-Man. Theoretically, in time, when you say Sky Comics, you'll think of Tempered Steele."

Tempered Steele Spectacular #1 is a one-shot, full color format written by Bob Hickey and Dwayne Haddix, pencilled and partially inked by Don (*Streetfighter*) Hillsman and inked by Bill Nichols. It ships in March '94.

Topps News

FAN-FAVORITE CADILLACS AND DINOSAURS

Topps Comics announces an all-new, authorized,monthly **Cadillacs and Dinosaurs** series. Based on the original, ongoing, **Xenozoic Tales** comics series created by Mark Schulta and published by Kitchen Sink Press, the new, full-color Topps Comics series is slated for release in February 1994.

Produced with Schultz' full cooperation, Topps Comics' **Cadillacs and Dinosaurs** damatically capitalizes on the increased awareness provided by the hit CBS-TV animated series and the new action toy line from Tyco.

To bring this action-packed adventure to life, Topps has recruited writer Roy Thomas and, for the first three issues, artist Dick Giordano. Giordano, whose long, successful association with DC Comics has endeared him to the comic world, will be making his Topps Comics debut with this brand new series. His many accomplishments include stints on **Batman, Green Lantern,** and **Wonder Woman.**

Thomas, also a renowned comics veteran, has written a number of Topps Comics, including the hugely successful **Bram Stoker's Dracula** movie adaptation.

Drawn in a classic style reminiscent of the fantasy-science fiction comics of the 1950s, **Cadillacs and Dinosaurs** is set in a post-cataclysmic age of 26th-century Earth, dubbed by Schultz as the Xenozoic Era. Human survivors, who have lived underground for nearly 500 years, have emerged to find a strange new world where dinosaurs and other prehistoric life coexist among the remnants of the 21st-century Earth (including sleek 1953 Cadillacs) that was destroyed by environmental upheaval. Following the fortunes of two main characters-- mechanic/shaman Jack "Cadillac" Tenrec and scientist Hannah "Dinosaur" Dundee, Schultz has created an Earth where nature is once again the most powerful force.

The first three issues of Topps Comics' **Cadillacs and Dinosaurs** follow Jack and Hannah from the City in the Sea (formerly New York City) to a bizarre swamp world, populated by an assortment of animal life, in search of Professor Fessenden. During their search, they discover a strange, mutated breed of intelligent, tentacled creatures. To make matters worse, Jack and company are being stalked by his arch-enemies, the nefarious Terhune family.

Each issue of **Cadillacs and Dinosaurs** is 32 pages and includes a separate six-page backup story, produced by an independent creative team. In addition, the first issue will feature a foil-enhanced cover by award winning, fan favorite artist William Stout, who will provide cover artwork for the first three issues.

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COLABUONO IS RETAILER OF THE YEAR

Gary Colabuono, owner of **Moondog's**, a popular chain of comic book and pop culture shops in Chicago, Ill., was named *Retailer of the Year* at this year's San Diego Comic Con. Votes from industry publishers, editors, creators, distributors, and retailers determined the choice. Colabuono is noted for the exceptional quality of his stores and his commitment to the community.

But Colabuono isn't just a retailer: he's expanding his horizons with **Moondog's Pop Culture Radio Hour**. This magazine-style radio show includes news, reviews, and interviews from the comic book and pop culture worlds. The show, hosted by Kim "Howard" Johnson, is broadcast in the Chicago area by WCBR92.7FM from 11 am to noon. Check it out!

ANOTHER RECORD-BREAKING GEN CON

Steve Lightle from Marvel and **Tim Bradstreet** from DC Comics were among dozens of artist celebrities at the recent Gen Con Game Fair. The convention also hosts the country's largest fantasy and science-fiction art gallery!

More than 20,000 people traveled from a dozen countries to this year's convention. Held in Milwaukee, the four-day Game Fair is the world's biggest multi-media game convention. The 1994 event will be held August 18-21.

For Early Bird info, call Sandy Kinney at (414) 248-3625 or send a SASE to: **Gen Con Game Fair, PO Box 756, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin 53147 USA.**

HEROES CON TO BE SOUTHEAST'S BIGGEST

The dates and initial industry sponsors of the 1994 Heroes Convention were released. The early support for the annual comics convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, by the giants in the industry gives every indication that the Con will be a major event in comics next year.

The 1994 Heroes Con will be held June 17-19 in a new convention center with more than 60,000 square feet of display space. The timing of the show will make it the first major consumer comics convention of the summer.

"The annual Heroes Convention will be bigger and better than ever in 1994," said Shelton Drum, president of the five-store chain of Heroes Aren't Hard To Find comics stores in North and South Carolina and sponsor of the annual comics convention. "We fully intend to host the biggest comics convention in the Southeast next year, and we are already lining up the resources to do it."

The leading comics publishing companies, including DC Comics, Image, Malibu, Marvel, and Valiant have signed on as sponsors of the 1994 Heroes Con, as have the nation's largest comics distributor, Diamond Comics Distributors, and the nation's largest publication about comics, *Wizard*. These publishers, as well as other major players in the industry who have signed up for the 1994 con, are already at work on programming for the show, which will be dramatically increased over the levels available in 1993.

With early commitments from the top publishers in the business, fan attendance at the Heroes Con is expected to increase from nearly 4,000 in 1993 to twice that many in 1994.

Known for its old-fashioned family style, the Heroes Con has impressed top artists such as **Dave Dorman** and **George Perez** with its down-home magic. In a letter praising the Heroes Con in a recent issue of *Comics Buyer's Guide*, Perez says the hosts

of the con "practically adopt you as their own and make sure that you have a gentle haven whenever you need to unwind or relax."

The 1994 Heroes Con has retained the services of Top Dog Marketing, Inc., to provide marketing and promotions assistance. George White, president of Top Dog, has coordinated a variety of marketing and public relations projects in the comics industry since 1990.

The following people have committed to attend the 1994 Heroes Convention in Charlotte, NC:

Publishers: ANIA; DC Comics; Diamond; Eclipse; Fleer; Image; Majestic; Malibu; Marvel; Upper Deck; Valiant; Wizard. **Artists/ Creators**: Dave Dorman; Joe Jusko; George Perez; Joe Quesada; John Romita, Jr.; Brian Stelfreeze; Jim Valentino. **Other**: Character Time; CIB; Rembrandt.

JIM LEE EUROTOUR IN THE WORKS

Diamond is currently finalizing plans with Homage Studios and *WildCATS* creator **Jim Lee** to mount an exclusive promotional tour of comic shops across Europe.

According to Vice-President of Purchasing **Bill Schanes**, **Lee** is interested in a three-to-four-week tour of five major cities across Europe, and each store on the itinerary would be advertised in all of **Jim Lee's** books for Homage Studios. **Lee** will reportedly create exclusive books, hats, and t-shirts for the tour.

"Ideally, Jim's visits would take place on Friday's, Saturday's, and Sunday's," said **Shanes**, "so that he'll have time to work during the week."

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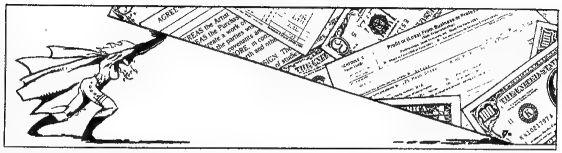


Getting Into The BUSINESS Of Comics

by Lurene Haines

Part 9: You Got The Job - How To Be A Good Businessman

Last time around we looked at a few things to keep in mind once you secure work in the industry. I covered keeping your humility, methods for securing more work, and how to deal with fans. This installment we'll look at one of the most important aspects of being a comics professional - how to be a good businessman. (Please note I will refer to both men and women as businessmen for simplification sake - I am not trying to be antagonistic or politically incorrect!)

Sometimes a newcomer will acquire work in the industry through sheer force of talent, or just plain dumb luck. Keep in mind, however, that you need more than either of those qualities to retain your professional status. You need to be a good businessman.

What Does It Mean To Be A Good Businessman?

There are many aspects to being a good businessman. This includes efficient and reliable *communication*, good *organization*, effective *financial management* and demonstrating *responsible business behavior*.

Ask anyone in the comic business what it means to 'be a good businessman' and you're liable to get a wide range of responses. The answer frequently depends on exactly who you're asking. To a freelancer, it can mean your employer is prompt in paying you, and that they maintain good, open communications with. To an editor or publisher, it can mean the freelancer delivers quality work on time, answers the phone, and is cooperative and communicative. To production staff it means quality artwork on good materials and good communications with the freelancer. Marketing people are concerned with the quality of the product, timeliness of delivery, and good contact with the freelancer. The accounting department needs accurate information, on-time invoicing and good communications with the freelancer. Do you see the pattern here? Communication. *That* is the most important key to being a good businessman.

Communication

Just what is meant by good communication? The dictionary defines communication as "the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions or information by speech, writing, etc." Simply put, it means ask questions, and be there to answer questions.

What this means is when you have a question of your publisher - regardless of the department involved - you call and get an answer. Don't procrastinate. Particularly if it will effect the finished product on which you are working.

It also means Answer Your Phone!! Don't screen calls so you can avoid an irate editor who wants to know the whereabouts of their three-week-late book. Don't take the phone of the hook and claim you had calls all day just to avoid that same editor. If you don't already have call waiting, get it. Or keep your social calls to a minimum during business hours.

As a freelancer, in an industry that doesn't require you to live where your publisher is located, the onus is on you to be available to talk to your employer(s). *That is the first rule of being a good businessman. Be available.*

Good communication also has a lot to do with telephone etiquette and general courtesy. Granted, many freelancers have

found themselves drifting into this hermit-like profession because of the relative isolation - and as a result the minimal demands on social interaction. Many freelancers lack the basic communication skills necessary to be a successful businessman. But that doesn't mean success will always be elusive. There are a plethora of books, courses and therapy groups that can help you master the basic social skills needed for good communication - both listening and talking. If assertiveness is your problem, work on that. If nervousness interferes with your ability to converse easily, practice overcoming your inhibitions. As silly as it may sound, despite the relative isolation of the freelance profession, these communication skills are mandatory. You will find yourself in a position where they are needed at conventions, during interviews, in your letter-writing skills, and in basic telephone conversations. Nothing will more greatly jeopardize your chances at a job than your inability to communicate your needs and wants, as well as your abilities.

Conventions

You will have to meet and greet potential employers, fans, other professionals, peers, and sometimes even come face to face with editors you've only ever interacted with by mail or over the telephone. Communication skills are the basic building blocks of self-promotion. You can't hope to 'sell' your skills as a freelancer if you are unable to communicate your abilities. This skill will help you 'get your foot in the door', show your work, line up tryouts, make business contacts, and even new friendships.

Interviews

As you can well imagine, communications skills are imperative for a successful interview. Much like the application at conventions, you will need to be competent at self-promotion for an interview to be remotely successful. If you choose this method of pursuing work, it is crucial that you make a good impression. A difficult thing to do if you're standing there staring at your shuffling feet, mumbling - or even worse, shooting off at the mouth inappropriately! Learn the accepted format for an interview. Read up on basic conversational skills. Learn a bit about your interviewer and their company. Rehearse what you want to say, and answers to basic questions you think you may be asked. Try to be prepared - it's the best defense against being left speechless.

Letter Writing

This particular communication skill is required at many levels within the freelance industry. You will need these skills when you first start out, in your Inquiry Letter. You must communicate concisely what it is you are interested in (acquiring submissions guidelines, work, etc.) and how you intend to go about getting it. You will need these skills when you send in your samples (describing your abilities, your interests, and your work situation). You will use these skills once you get the job, both in contract negotiations and execution, and in correspondence with your editor.

If you are unsure as to how to proceed with a business letter for any of these situations, invest in a book on letter writing or utilize the reference books available at your local library. Ask a friend, parent or teacher, who you are confident has this skill or knowledge, to look over your letters or make suggestions on how to proceed. Just remember, keep it clear, keep it simple - that's the best formula for good letter-writing communication.

Telephone

As I emphasized earlier, be available to answer questions and don't hesitate to seek clarification when you have questions of your own. Telephone communication skills are not significantly different than interview or convention communication skills. You need to listen careful to what is said, and answer appropriately. Try not to digress, or behave in an inappropriately personal manner. Be polite. And remember - the editor you're talking to is probably swamped with work. They don't always have time for a little chat. Just because you sit at your drawing table or keyboard, wishing for a little digression from the work at hand, doesn't mean your employer has that same interest - or free time! Be considerate of your conversant's time. Again, keep it simple, keep it clear. And keep it brief!

Organization

I can see all you 'absent-minded professor' types out there cringing at this word like it was some type of heinous weapon. But believe me, good organization can be one of the most effective tools in successful business.

Stacks of books have been published on how to better organize your time, your work, your personal life, your paperwork, your bookkeeping - heck, even your sock drawer! Sit back and think about that. It means a) there's lots of people out there just as disorganized as you, and b) there must be some good reason for being **more** organized.

There is - it will make you a more effective, even powerful, businessman.

As a freelancer, there are many areas in your professional life that can greatly benefit from better organization. Some of the most effective areas to organize include your studio or office, your work time, and your travel schedule.

Studio or Office Organization

There are many aspects of studio and office organization that will contribute to your success as a businessman. The most obvious of these is the actual physical organization of your workspace.

Make sure that your work supplies and materials are conveniently and readily stored. Keep more frequently used materials closer to hand, and supplies used less frequently stored less accessibly. The less time you spend wandering around looking for the right paper, the pencil you want, or clean-up materials, the more time you'll spend actually getting the work done. Keep your work space well organized, and you eliminate a hurdle keeping you from being a good businessman.

If you ship your finished work to your publisher, remember to keep an adequate supply of shipping materials on hand; envelopes, boxes, cardboard, tape, shipping invoices, stamps, etc. If you are running on a tight deadline, you cannot afford to be delayed by a lack of the appropriate shipping supplies. Keep a diligent check on your materials, and avoid last-minute emergencies because of unwanted shortages.

Freelancers frequently collect their pay in a most erratic manner. Sometimes this is due to the payment schedules kept by their employers, sometimes it's due to the irregular nature of the delivery of their work. Regardless of whether you work for a company which provides billing invoices for you, you should make a habit of keeping your *own* invoices for record purposes. Although this may sound redundant, it eliminates a lot of the problems associated with lost invoices, and allows you to better track your income. This can be invaluable for both your bookkeeping, and income tax purposes. Keep a good supply of invoices on hand, so that you aren't caught short when sending out a job.

Also remember to keep tabs on your other business supplies - the ones that enable you to conduct business; letterhead, business cards, sample sheets, etc. There will be many occasions where you will be put on the spot to hurriedly provide a potential employer with information. Don't get caught short, and end up looking like a novice. Demonstrate your professionalism by being prepared. This advice also applies to your materials. Keep tabs on your paper stock or ink supplies. Don't find yourself in the middle of a critical job, and running short of necessary materials. Your preparedness can make or break your professional career!

Organizing Your Files

One of the most important aspects of being a good, organized businessman, is maintaining effective records of your business dealings. For this reason, I will now address this topic on it's own.

Good record keeping serves an important variety of purposes, including protecting both you and your employer's work interests. One of the first tasks you should set for yourself once you decide to pursue a freelance career, is to set up a basic filing system. Now, don't panic! I'm not proposing you build a new Library of Congress. Just take the time to organize your paperwork in a reasonable manner. There's no need to spend massive amounts of money on this endeavor, as inexpensive (or free!) cardboard boxes will serve adequately as filing cabinets. Invest a bit of money in a bulk package of inexpensive file folders. Then, sit down and organize your paperwork in the manner that will work best for you. (A basic organizational plan is illustrated in Box 1.)

By keeping up on your record keeping, you will be able to better track your work, your income, and business dealings with the various publishers you will work with. It will also help you keep tabs of your budget, supplies, and various business and financial responsibilities. And believe me, when an editor returns your call about a late payment, and is told you can send copies of all the pertinent

Organizing Your Files

There are a few simple guidelines you can use to better organize your business records. You should have two sets of files - company files and expense files.

Company Files

Your company files should be comprised of a folder for each company with which you regularly do work, correspond, or receive material from. Companies can include publishers, distributors, retailers, and individual clients. If you regularly send out samples to a particular company, make a separate file to track those records and their responses. It also helps to keep a small card file to record correspondence dates for sending out samples and receiving responses. There are about twenty well-established publishers, but if you have minimal contact with any f them, create a Miscellaneous file and use that for your record keeping.

Expense Files

As part of your bookkeeping practices, you should keep a file for each company or business with whom you do business. These include overhead expenses (rent, telephone, electricity, water/sewer), supplies (office supply firms, art supply companies, furniture sales), services (shipping, mail, printing, lawyer, accountant), and any others that you discover apply when you organize your business expenses.

Box 1

documents, to help in sorting out the problem, they will be both grateful and impressed with your business skills. And ultimately, you will benefit, since you will be able to better manage your career.

Scheduling Your Time

Organizing your work schedule efficiently is also a critical aspect of being a good businessman. To be a successful freelancer, you need to learn how to estimate your work time. If an editor offers you a regular series, assess the workload, and ensure that you can meet the required deadlines before you head out for that champagne celebration. Because, if you are a newcomer who accepts a job, and then fails to deliver on time, you will quickly find yourself hard-pressed to drum up work. Editors talk with each other and with other freelancers. If an individual is having problems with a specific freelancer - especially a hot-shot newcomer - it won't be long before word of it spreads through the industry like wildfire. To put it more simply, you'll find yourself black-balled.

Some freelancers - both new and many of those who are firmly established - have an inordinate amount of trouble estimating the time a job will take them. Sometimes this is due to inexperience. Sometimes it's due to plain old laziness. But, mostly it's due to poor organization.

Your first step to improving your scheduling skills should be to get a calendar. Select one with a large, open, monthly grid, where you can make notes about work due dates, income coming in, travel plans, and any other pertinent business information. Get into the habit of keeping a written calendar record of every job you accept, and the date that it must ship to the editor.

When you send out work, and invoice for payment, make a note on your calendar for the date that money should arrive. Keep in mind the date that company issues payment cheques, and allow for postal travel time. However, keep tabs on those funds due, and follow up in a professional manner when they are late.

Keep tabs of convention dates - both the major shows and any you wish to attend. Allow for travel time, and time to settle back into a work routine once you get home. Try to remember to allow for these trips, so that it will not interfere with your ability to deliver work. If you attend a convention, and your editor or an associate of your editor spots you there when

you are late on delivering work, almost nothing can get you canned faster!! If you keep track of your travel time, you will find it much easier to manage your work schedule and still fit in time to promote your current projects, and line up new work at conventions.

Travel Organization

Another important area of organization, is travelling to conventions. As simple as this may sound, for a freelancer, this can be a particularly hectic and critical time.

The convention circuit is meant to help the freelancer promote their projects, line up

Travel Checklists

If you've ever travelled anywhere for business or pleasure, you know how hectic getting ready can be, and how easy it is to forget something important. To avoid showing up without the appropriate clothing, toiletries or professional materials, it's a good idea to create a checklist. Especially if you choose a career in the comic industry, with it's many conventions! Here is an example of an actual list that you can use as a guide to create your own personal travel checklist.

Clothing and Personal Items

- clean shirt for each day of trip (count days away, including travel days)
- appropriate clothing for the climate of the destination city (check the weather reports)
- at least one dressier outfit for business functions
- appropriate footwear to go with the clothing you bring
- soap, shampoo, deodorant, toothbrush & paste (all critical items if you hope to present yourself as a pleasant professional!)
- razor (for those who shave)

Professional Supplies

- paper, pencils, eraser, pens, ink, paint, brushes, markers, illo. board - for creating new work
- metallic and/or bleedproof pens for autographing
- portfolio displaying your work
- business cards
- sample sheets
- utility knife, push pins, tape, rubber bands, bulldog clips - for displaying and packaging work
- some type of attache or art bag for carrying your materials
- materials to sell - originals, commissions, published copies, prints

An added word of advice: If you plan to travel regularly as a comic professional, particularly if you will be bringing your work to conventions, invest in a compact carry-on duffle bag and a moderately sized portfolio. You are limited by the airlines to two pieces of carry-on luggage. Master packing your bag with lightweight, non-bulky clothing and materials. **Avoid checking luggage** - especially your originals! - and you will avoid the distress of lost luggage, luggage pick-up delays, or damage to your personal belongings.

new work, and make business and social connections. It generally entails taking at least a few days (more depending on how far away, and how big a show it is) away from your work schedule. There are many things that must be done to properly prepare for a convention.

· *Securing display space* - for artists, even more than writers, securing display space is important for promoting your work, and making sales of prints and originals in an effort to defray some of your travel expenses. You may also wish to secure art show display space. This space is generally at a premium, and usually costs some amount (which varies depending on the show), so making advance arrangements is about the only way to ensure space will be available for you. If you are working as a professional, most conventions will supply you with a table if you provide them with enough lead time to make the arrangements. Organizing your travel schedule early in the year will allow you to make the appropriate contacts necessary to secure display space.

· *Making travel arrangements* - Because of the competitive nature of travel fees (ie. airfare, car rentals, hotel rates) it is imperative that you make your plans far enough in advance to take advantage of the early booking discounts. Also, don't forget to mention the convention rate when making hotel reservations. Take advantage of any combination saver coupons (eg. car rental/hotel packages). The money you save on travel expenses can be better used to wine and dine a potential employer - or better yet, pay some bills at home! Planning ahead for travel dates will help you save money and the aggravation of an attempted last minute booking in an over-booked city!

· *Make a travel checklist* - As over-organized as this may seem, making a travel checklist is probably one of the most valuable tools I have developed since working as a professional freelancer. Early on in my career, I would scramble to gather clothing, toiletries, my portfolio and professional supplies at the last minute - sometimes only hours before leaving town. Invariably, and without fail, I always left some crucial item at home, and found myself sorely missing it, or forking out big dollars in a strange city to replace the item I needed. Finally, in frustration, I sat down and made a comprehensive list of everything I would need for convention travel. I typed up the list, and I keep it in a drawer with my travel supplies. It's looking a little dog-eared now, and I'm ready to make a new copy, but it's been a long time now since I arrived at a convention unprepared. (See Box 2. for an example of some of the items you could include on your checklist, and the way to go about making one for yourself.)

If you take the time to plan your convention trips a bit more thoroughly, you will find yourself a lot more relaxed once you arrive at the show. You will communicate professionalism, and potential employers can't help but see that.

Financial Management

Before we get off and running on all the different areas of financial management you should pay attention to, I want to highlight the most important, and cardinal rule:

KEEP ALL YOUR RECEIPTS!!!!

Although this might seem like a burdensome task, you will find over time that you begin to do this automatically - it will become a habit. Also, you will find that many of those seemingly inconsequential receipts add up to big deductions at tax time. Now that you're a self-employed freelancer, nobody takes care of your taxes for you, and you will be paying additional self-employment taxes. Those receipts are like little slips of gold. Never, never throw them away! With that said, let's move on.

One of the most critical areas for demonstrating your professionalism is good financial management. Now, don't run screaming from the room, with visions of your tenth grade math teacher clouding your mind!! This is much simpler, and a lot less painful. But it will require some small degree of self-discipline.

There are a variety of ways to manage your finances efficiently, from throwing away receipts and pretending everything is fine to hiring a bookkeeper. However, for a newcomer just getting started in the business, there is a much easier middle road. Here's a few important steps you can take to better manage your finances:

1) *Invoice for every piece of work you do, and keep a copy of that invoice for your records.* Regardless of whether a publisher provides you with invoices, make out your own - even if it's just a handwritten slip of paper (although a more professional printed or typewritten form is better) - so that you have a record of income you can track. Many publishers require the freelancer to send in all copies of the company's invoice form, so unless they send back a copy - providing it hasn't been lost! - you have no record of the business transaction, and a lack of a paper trail makes it a lot harder to collect you pay.

2) *Document the dates work is shipped and monies are due on a calendar.* Keep track of income you are expecting. This way, nobody will ever get too far behind in paying you, and your own bill-collectors won't have to wait to be paid!

3) *Set up a simple bookkeeping system.* There are a variety of bookkeeping systems, ranging from throwing all your receipts in a shoebox and presenting them to an accountant the week before your income tax is due, to keeping elaborate budget credit/debit records. As a new freelancer, I suggest keeping your life simple. Set up an easy recordkeeping form to track all your pertinent receipts, as they apply to your income tax. Keep a file folder or box or tray, or some type of receptacle handy in your home, office or studio, in which to dump receipts when you come in each day. At the end of the month (or every couple of months), set aside time to organize those receipts and record them in your bookkeeping. (See Box 3. for a sample bookkeeping record) At the end of the year when tax time rolls around, you are going to be very happy to have already completed the bulk of the work. Additionally, this provides you with a means to track your monthly and annual expenditures on various items like shipping and supplies. This will enable you to better budget your income, and help you in pricing out your work and a reasonable page rate.

4) *Open a separate savings account to use exclusively for tax monies.* At the end of each year, Uncle Sam will collect approximately 20% of your gross income in federal, state and self-employment taxes. The actual total varies between states, and depends on how meticulous you are about tracking receipts and deductions. It's also dependant on how much you're making. Suffice it to say, however, if you keep a designated tax fund account, set aside 20% of every cheque that comes in - BEFORE ONE PENNY IS SPENT!! - you will find yourself comfortably protected at the end of the year, when you have to file your income tax return. Also, once you have established a profit-making year, you will be required to pay quarterly estimate tax payments every three months, based on your estimated income for that year. Failure to make these payments will result in big, fat penalty payments. It's in your very best interest to discipline yourself into setting that money aside. As a sidebar - don't expect that your publishers will pay you a few weeks early, or give you a nice little advance. They are well experienced in the last-minute scramble by freelancers to produce tax payment money, and don't look on the practice too kindly. Few things will jeopardize your professional standing faster.

5) *Maintain a chequing account to make business payments.* Many young freelancers like to keep their money "cash on hand." This may seem like a good idea at the time, but here are a few excellent reasons for maintaining some form of chequing account:

- *It is impossible to open a business account without some type of chequing account already established.* If you want an account with your local art supply or office supply business, or Federal Express, it won't happen unless you can prove established business ties. This means a credit history, which means an active bank account. Open one, use it.

- *It will help you establish a credit record.* It's almost impossible to get credit anywhere without some kind of credit history. An active bank account serves that purpose. You may feel you don't need credit right now, but what if you decide to buy a fax machine, or a photocopier for your studio or office, and want to do financing. Without that credit history, you will find it very difficult.

- *It will greatly simplify your ability to keep track of business payments.* To keep an accurate record of business expenditures, it is very useful to have the cheque stub or copy as a receipt. Since sometimes you will forget the receipt, may not be given a receipt, or may receive an unintelligible receipt, the chequing record will greatly improve your recordkeeping abilities.

A Simplified Bookkeeping System

If you follow the categories allowed for deductions on your income tax form, it is very easy to set up a simple bookkeeping system. Here is a easy plan. Feel free to tailor it to your own business needs.

1) Purchase a 7 column, Columnar Book or Pad tat can be opened so two pages are used for each month. Alternatively, look for a 14 column (or greater) single page pad or book. Make your entries on the numbered lines, using the line number to represent the day of the month.

2) Label the first two columns **Income** and **Payer**. These are the places you should record the amount of monies received, and who the monies are from.

3) The remaining columns should be labeled to coincide with the deductible categories allowed on your tax return. A good sample is as follows:

Dental/Medical - Keep a record of dental and medical expenses, including prescription medicine costs. Don't list health insurance under this heading.

Car/Truck Expenses - If you use your vehicle for work (delivering work, driving to FedEx, business trips) keep a mileage log, and you will not only be able to deduct a portion of your gas and maintenance costs, but you will be able to do devaluation (cost of wear and tear) on your vehicle.

Insurance - List medical, car, home and business insurance payments here.

Freight - This includes courier and parcel services, as well as postage costs.

Business Expenses - These are the costs of doing business, and include office supplies and equipment

Supplies - These are the costs of actual physical supplies required to create your work. For artists, this can include paper, board, canvas, pens, pencils, ink, paint, and reference books. For writers, this can include paper, computer disks, pens, pencils and reference books.

Travel - Here is the place to list expenses incurred during travel, including air/bus/train fares, car rentals, hotel costs, taxis, subway, parking, etc.

Meals and Entertainment - This is where business related meal and entertainment costs should be listed. If you art travelling, the IRS permits a fully-documented receipt total or a daily allowed budget. If you entertain a business client, in the process of actually doing business, that expense is listed here.

Dues and Publications - List your expenses of business related membership fees and regular business publications to which you subscribe, and on which you depend to conduct business. The IRS continues to vacillate on the allowability of this expense, but it is valuable to keep a record, just to better manage your budget.

Utilities and Telephone - The IRS allows a portion of your utility and telephone expenses for business use when you have a home office. You will need to know the approximate square footage of your dedicated business space, to determine it's percentage of your home. That is the percentage of your expenses you should record. This includes, electricity, gas, water, sewer, garbage pick-up, and general maintenance. The total cost of your telephone calls (long distance only) that are made for business should be listed in full.

Other Expenses - list lawyer, accountant, charity donations, or any other expenses that don't fit the other categories. List the amount, and note what it represents next to it.

6) *Use your bookkeeping records to create a comprehensive budget.* Once you've laid out an easy to follow bookkeeping record, you can use the information it provides to guide you in budgeting your income. Track the amounts you spend on professional services, supplies and expenses, and you will be able to determine how your money is being spent, and how to better manage it. This will also help prevent that last minute panic at the end of a pay period, where you wonder where your next dollar is coming from, and when! Once you've determined where and how your money is being spent, you may find that there is room in your income plan to set aside additional savings, that you can designate for special cases, like unexpected travel expenses, or financial emergencies (eg. medical expenses, lost work and income, unexpected home or car repairs, etc.)

7) *Make a budget for convention travel and stick with it.* Since convention travel is a fairly critical part of being a comic freelancer, it's safe to say that you will most likely be attending at least one or two conventions each year. These little trips can be unduly expensive, and if you don't take the time to plan a travel budget you may find yourself tapping into next months rent money! Plan ahead for travel, accommodation and meal costs, and then add at least 15% more. This is a good travel budget, with a bit of leeway for unexpected situations which may arise. By planning your travel budget ahead of time, you will be able to set aside that money in smaller increments, which should help minimize the burden on your regular income and bills.

If you start out your freelance career making a point of following these simple financial management steps, you will find it provides you with a variety of benefits throughout your professional career. You will always have a sharp grasp of your financial status, it will provide you with the information you need to set prices when lining up new jobs, it will ensure that you don't find yourself hip deep in tax evasion problems (and we all know that messing with Uncle Sam can mean serious repercussions - like jail time!). Most importantly though, you will constantly demonstrate your professionalism to prospective employers and that, in addition to your hard work, will guarantee you a long, and possibly illustrious, career.

Business Responsibility

The fourth facet of being a good businessman, is demonstrating business responsibility. This mean simply staying on top of your responsibilities as a career professional. As much as we'd all love to immerse ourselves in our work - be it creating art, or writing stories - there is always the business aspects of our jobs to attend to. If you are independently wealthy, fine, hire someone to do your dirty work and just do the fun stuff. Perhaps once you've become an established and highly lauded pro, you can hire people to do those jobs. But in all reality, you will most likely have to handle these task yourself, and efficient and responsible handling of these jobs will ensure continued freelance employment.

Meeting Deadlines

Unless you have a battalion of assistants to help you produce your work, you will have to be very conscientious in making sure you meet your deadlines. When a publisher hires you to produce work, they are operating under a variety of very strict deadlines - marketing, solicitation, production, printing, shipping, etc. To have a successful and popular product means making all these deadlines on time. Therefore, it is ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL that you deliver the completed work in the time frame you agree to. In our industry, failure of creators to meet deadlines is probably the most common complaint of every publisher. And it's not just restricted to newcomers! This problem is uniform across all levels of expertise, experience and popularity. Some publishers overcome the problem by refusing to process a book until the material is completely finished and delivered. Often pay for the freelancer is withheld until completion, too. Other publishers make a point of avoiding working with unreliable creators.

Often fans question why one creator, who's work is merely adequate, continues to be granted one prestigious project after another, when other much more 'stellar talents' have very little work produced. In many cases, this is due to the inability of those 'stellar talents' to deliver their work in a timely manner. Some freelancers are fine until the deadline pressure is

on - which is why their work appears so sporadically - but freeze up and are unable to produce when under deadline pressure. They should be considering another field of work. Publishing is rife with deadlines, and a successful freelancer needs to learn how to budget their time to be a good and respected businessman.

If you can improve your ability to reliably deliver consistent work, there is a good chance that you will find yourself one of the well-respected creators in constant demand.

Proper Handling of Paperwork

The federal government seems to have nothing on the comic industry, when it comes to pushing paperwork. There are many areas of our business that require forms to be filled out - contract agreements, invoicing, correspondence, preliminary sketches, rough drafts, shipping bills, artwork releases, return of artwork , cheques, etc. It is critical that you make a practice of completing the appropriate paperwork in a timely manner. Failure to do so not only affects your appearance of professionalism, but can result in late payment for work, lost artwork and, even worse, violation of work agreements.

As I mentioned in Part 7, the legal aspects of the business can make or break a professional career. If you take the time to responsibly review (that means READ CAREFULLY) your contracts, ensure that all appropriate signatures are thereon, and keep copies of all your contracts, you will be well protected in your business. Failure to do these simple things can result in gross violations on the part of less reputable publishers, to which you will have no recourse to respond.

Keep careful track of your paperwork trail, and you will always have a clear record of your business dealings. Your publisher will be happy, you will be happy, and you can get down to the business of creating entertainment.

Keeping Your Hat In The Ring

Just because you've finally secured that ever-elusive comic job, doesn't mean you're now set for life. The comic industry is a transitive business. Project, publishers and freelancers come and go before you can blink twice. What seems like a sure thing can be snatched away from you without warning, and unless you have the 'iron-clad contract from hell', you'll find yourself both out of work and lacking income.

With this fact in mind, you should make a point of keeping your hat in the ring. Stay apprised of the sales of your project, be aware of the status of your publisher or the line they're using to market the work. Keep feelers out in the market to ensure that you have a variety of possible back-up jobs in the wings. You may also want to take on the odd single piece or small one-shot job (schedule permitting, of course), just to ensure that your name his highly visible in the market.

Follow the same steps you took when looking for work, to make your availability known:

- send updated sample sheets regularly
- occasionally call around to 'shoot the breeze' with new business acquaintances (other freelancers, editors, publishers, convention organizers, retailers). This will give you an opportunity to renew your friendly ties, pick up any news, and keep your name on their mind
- make sure you take full advantage of conventions. This is an excellent place to continue forging social and business relationships, and a fertile source of obtaining new work. Psychologically, you will be a more in-demand freelancer if you're already working. Editors will wonder what they're missing, and you'll find yourself with plenty of work offers or suggestions.
- court other editors and projects within the company you work for. If you enjoy your work relationship with a particular publisher, there's nothing wrong with doing the majority of your work with that company. Ask your editor, or others in the company about upcoming projects for which they might consider you.
- don't hesitate to approach other related markets. The comic industry has ties and associations with many other markets that would be interested in your freelance skills; games, books, magazines, toys designs, movies, television, trading cards, t-shirts, postcards, novelty items, etc. Don't restrict yourself to the comic industry, if you have other outside interests. Many of these related industries are lucrative sources of income. In addition, they provide you with a second audience, which can be drawn over to follow your comic work. Take advantage of any markets that will help promote you as a talent.

Stay Apprised Of The Industry

The final aspect of business responsibility that I want to address, is staying on top of the status of the business. It is important to be informed, if you hope to be a successful businessman. You need to follow what trends and fads are drawing the readership. You need to be aware of how your work will fit into the market, and which of it's characteristics will draw readers.

There are a variety of news publications that report regularly on happenings in the industry. Last issue I provided a list of some of the better known trade publications when discussing convention listings. These included *The Comics Buyer's Guide* (weekly newspaper format), *Hero Illustrated* and *Wizard* (monthly color magazines), *Comic Scene* (monthly newsstand color magazine), *Comic Shop News* (monthly color news flyer), *The Comic's Journal* (monthly black and white interview magazine) and *Arena Magazine* (monthly black and white industry news and interview publication). The distributor catalogues also provide a valuable source of information about what's available in the market. Read one or more of these publications regularly, and you will find it much easier staying on top of where you fit into the comic industry.

Remember to update your business files using information you acquire in your reading and convention socializing. This will pay off both in terms of acquiring new work, and in carrying on an informed and intelligent conversation with new business contacts.

To Review

This time we've covered the four main areas that contribute to being a good businessman - communication, organization, financial management and business responsibility. I described how good *communication skills* include *making yourself available, asking questions,* and *staying in touch* through a variety of means. I covered *organization,* including how to *schedule your time, organizing your files,* and *planning your travel.* We also looked at *financial management,* covering *setting up bookkeeping, handling taxes, invoicing, designing a working budget,* and most importantly, *keeping your receipts.* Lastly we discussed *business responsibility* which includes *meeting your deadlines, proper handling of paperwork, keeping your work options open,* and *staying apprised of the industry.*

Our next installment will cover Special Cases: Creators Aren't The Only Working Stiffs. I will review some of the other jobs in the industry, and who your creative skills could be equally useful in one of these more business oriented fields. Until then, follow the guidelines I've set out for being a good businessman, and in no time you'll find yourself Getting Into The Business Of Comics!

Business Card Etiquette:
When Should You Hand It Out?

Many consultants say there is rarely a bad time to hand out your business card. Phyllis Carr, owner of Executive Protocol in Newport Beach, California and Terri Mandell, author of "Power SchmoozingL The New Rules for Social and Business Success" suggest these guidelines:

It's inappropriate to automatically hand your business card to people you've just met. They haven't had time to even decide it it's something they want, and it makes you appear pushy and overbearing. Spend at least five minutes with someone before requesting or giving a card.

Be discreet when handing out business cards at a social function

There's no excuse not to have a business card. However, if you're caught in a situation where you've been asked for your card and you don't have any, ask for that individuals card and send yours by mail.

Never give out soiled or bent cards to anyone. It's better to write your name on a napkin! It is best, though, to wait and send your card in the mail, perhaps personalizing it by crossing out your printed name and handwriting a note on the card.

Carry a card holder so your business cards can be easily found in your briefcase or portfolio.

Feel free to augment your business card with sample sheets, proposals or tearsheets featuring your work. You should try to avoid relying solely on your business card as a point of contact, because they can be lost, misplaced, and don't tell the whole story about you and your abilities.

If you have questions about anything covered in this column, please feel free to write. Send letters to **Lurene Haines, c/o Arena Magazine, 264 Main St., Florence, KY 41042**

PREVIEW

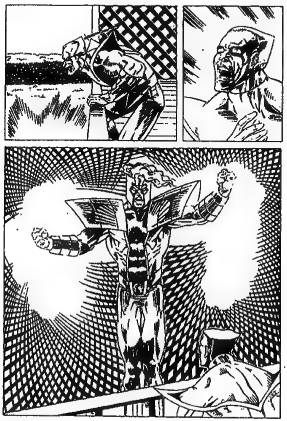
SEEKER #1

by Joe Martin and Raff Ienco
Published by Sky Comics

PREVIEW

TEMPERED STEELE SPECTACULAR #1

by Bob Hickey, Dwayne Haddix, Dennis Feeback, Don Hillsman and Bill Nichols
Published by Sky Comics



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CATALOG

Brit Bits

Garth Ennis and John McCrea spill the beans!

by Paul H. Birch

Garth Ennis began his writing career with *Troubled Souls* for Fleetway's **Crisis** anthology, where he was partnered with fellow Northern Ireland born artist John McCrea, himself relatively new to the medium having worked for publishers such as Marvel UK. The story further justified the belief that serious subject matter could be dealt with via the comic book form, but the creators themselves made a point of demonstrating that not all was doom and gloom in Ireland by delivering the amusing follow-up **For A Few Troubles More**. There is a third story entitled **Dick**, picked up by Tundra UK before that company's first financial floundering, but now existing only in comic book limbo.

Individually and together the pair continued working on several projects for Fleetway, Garth in particular taking over the unenviable task of writing the weekly *Judge Dredd* strip for **2000 AD** from John Wagner and Alan Grant for 2 1/2 years. It may well feature one of his "favourite characters" but it's a series which he can now only find the time to write 15-20 episodes a year of.

As you'll no doubt be aware, John and Garth are now the regular team on DC's **The Demon**, and as you read this the Annual which ties into *Bloodlines* should be out on the shelves.

"That was interesting for me," Garth told me, "because I haven't handled many DC superhero universe characters. Back in January when Dan [Raspler, the editor] offered me it I hadn't actually had the regular series confirmed.

"If seemed fairly easy; you just put this alien monster into the Annual and by the end of the book it has to create this new superhero. I was kind of lucky because they gave me the great big fat alien, which meant I could have Etrigan beating the crap out of it and making jokes about its weight!"

"The Annual had these aliens which were designed by Arthur Adams: brilliant artist but I'd like to kill him!" John joked. "They were the most complicated things to draw ever; with big manes of hair, lots of spinal columns, individual ribs, and all these guts hanging out everywhere. After I'd drawn one of those guys I'd draw a face and start to put in these extra lines. I found myself catching myself and saying, 'Hold on!', then getting the tipex out because you don't really need all those lines. I don't like really extraneous detail that much, though I can get carried away occassionally. I know some people who put in so many lines they'll never finish a job.

"Working with Dan Raspler is great. As far as I know, the sales on it weren't too good when Garth and I joined. Towards the end I think it became a parody of the way it started off, and Etrigan came across as a big Muppet who breathed flames. What I've done is nastied him up, made him thin, bony and gnarly with big jagged teeth-- sort of Geigeresque-- at least that's what I'm after!" the artist laughed, and Garth went on to state, "It's not going to be a grim, dark *Vertigo* type of book; there's still going to be a lot of humour in it. If you ever saw Alan Moore's stuff when he wrote Etrigan into Swamp Thing, there's a lot of that sort of thing.

"The way I see Etrigan, he **is** a demon, a creature of evil. The only reason he's going to fight bad guys is if he thinks they're badder than he is, and he doesn't like the idea of that."

"My work borders on the cartoony a lot and I'm still doing that with **The Demon**," John reflected as he went on to explain one particular issue they've got planned. "If you remember in one issue, Etrigan was on Yo! MTV Raps with the baseball cap on and all that; We're bringing him back like that because Garth and I are both into rap music. It's a good excuse for uzies, street violence, and big shoes... plus, of course,

Etrigan talks in rhyme."

This time next year, there'll be a new writer's byline on **Hellblazer** but Garth revealed he plans to go out in a big way with a six part story wherein, "He'll have his final confrontation with the Devil." He's also written **The Goddess** for the *Vertigo* line, which is being illustrated by Phil Winslade. "I've seen the pencils for six out of the eight issues and they look absolutely spectacular!

"It's a kind of epic adventure story. It's on a very broad canvas as opposed to the introverted inner city type stories you seem to be getting a lot of these days. There's a girl who works in a zoo in a small town in England and she starts developing these powers that she can't control. It's a complete mystery to her, she can't switch them on and off at will, but she appears to be able to do anything. So with a bunch of her friends, who seem to more a hindrance than help, she sets off to try and discover what's happened to her: It's bigger than she could ever imagine."

Although, most interestingly, John said a *Vertigo* project he may be working on with Dick Foreman involves "zoology"... I doubt we're going to find the latest comics trend revolving around caged beasts... but what do I know?

Both **Demon** collaborators are doing work for Archie Goodwin on **Legends of the Dark Knight**, albeit separately. Garth has a two parter to be drawn by former **Hellblazer** artist, Will Simpson, and John a three parter scripted by **Lazarus Churchyard** creator Warren Ellis.

Judge Dredd, who's at last going to have his own movie starring Sylvester Stallone (and believe me, this is causing more frustration for British readers than Michael Keaton's role in **Batman** ever did in the US!) is, as most American readers will gather, Britain's most popular character. However, what might not be so apparent is that it was created by a Scottish writer, John Wagner, and a Spanish artist, Carlos Ezquerra. Alongside some work for DC with Wagner and Grant, Ezquerra is working with Garth on the four part **Bloody Mary** series for Dark Horse Comics.

"On the face of it it's an action-adventure thing, but we managed to cram enough of, what I like to think of as **2000 AD** style humour to keep us both happy," Garth told me. "I'm not a complete fan of straight action stories; I like something with a humourous twist to it. I've written the first episode and we're into pay negotiations with Dark Horse. Talk about good companies, my experiences with them so far have been fantastic."

And finally for this month, the original British version of **Deadline** is currently featuring *Bottom of the Box* which was written by former editor Si Spencer and drawn by John whilst waiting for the published **Streets** #3's script to get the go-ahead from DC.

"It's a sort of psychological thriller using losts of s&m, and drug abuse. And there is actually no nudity as such, we've been very careful on that," the artist commented, adding, "I've done it in pastels and conte crayons. It's more film noire, with cast shadows and halflit faces. I find working like that very easygoing; I can produce a page very quickly and have it looking good." If you like what John's doing over in **The Demon**, ask your retailers to order it as US distributors do stock the magazine sized **Deadline**; Other than that, you'll have to wait until Dark Horse reprints it in their version.

#17

TODD McFARLANE

ARENA MAGAZINE #17

Welcome yourself to one of our greatest issues to date! Headline feature? Todd McFarlane! Does more need be said? How about Todd McFarlane interviewed by Beau Smith! That's right! Beau and Todd chew the fat, mix it up, rabblerouse and arm wrestle!
They'll also mention the Spawn/Batman crossover, the showdown in Philly with Peter David and anything else they feel like confabulating about! Other interviews include Kelley Jones and Adam Hughes!

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